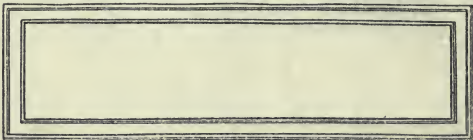


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A LOST EPIC





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# A LOST EPIC

AND OTHER POEMS

BY

WILLIAM CANTON



WILLIAM BLACKWOOD AND SONS  
EDINBURGH AND LONDON  
MDCCCLXXXVII

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**GENERAL**

TO  
HER MAJESTY THE QUEEN.

1837———1887

*When God enthroned You, fifty years ago,  
And the grey Dukes in homage would have knelt,  
You rose up to prevent them, blushing—*

“No,

I am your niece Victoria !”

*England felt  
Her heart beat ; England loved You ! It was good  
So great a Queen should be a girl so true !*

*Madam, these Realms praise God—and reverence You—  
For Fifty Years of Sovereign Womanhood.*



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## A LOST EPIC.

**T**HIS is his little grandchild! . . . Run away,  
And pluck the gentleman a bunch of  
flowers!

A pretty tot! Poem he never wrote  
To match in freshness and in winning grace  
That rosy little slip of roguery!

Here are his poems—all he gave the world—  
A crown octavo, thin and printed wide—  
Forgotten now, but forty years ago  
Noted with wonder as a new-seen star,  
Deemed sweet as snowdrops after months of snow,  
And simple as snowdrops too! He prized them  
not—

“The babble o’ green fields in his feverish youth;  
Mere chirps and fluted trills—because the earth

Was sunny and blossom-blithe, and but to live  
A very joy ;” for he’d outgrown the broad  
Untutored heart of homely man and maid,  
And, heedless of the common work-day life  
Which prompts the poems all the world can feel,  
Could scorn the only pages left to keep  
His name in kindly memory.

Take the book ;  
And since I prize his gift—no doubt, no doubt !—  
Still, have a more than special care of this !

Four years ago he came and brought the child,  
A prattling three-year-old, and lived alone—  
An aged maid for housekeeper and nurse—  
In yon small cottage, where the beechwood shrinks  
From over-keen blown kisses of the sea.

A tall, mild, wise-eyed, silver-bearded man—  
The sea-wind scattering down our village street  
His sixtieth autumn’s crimson leaves—he moved  
Among us, noting all our seaboard ways,  
Stealing our little people’s hearts with sweets,  
And through the children winning all the wives ;  
But when the men, rough storm-flushed fellows,  
smiled

With slightly pitying, half-amused contempt,  
Their homespun wits he startled to respect  
By better knowledge of the things they knew,  
Till all our ale-house sages, pipe in cheek,  
Confessed "the Doctor" knew a sight o' things  
Beyond their weather-gage, and last of all  
Our gaunt old whaler, ear-ringed and tattooed,  
Bragged less of outland folk and foreign ports.  
Nay, I, too, when the gracious Sunday bell  
Gathered our village—little children all  
Around a common knee—began to feel  
An undefined attraction to the man,  
And found my sermon three-parts preached to him ;  
While he, with reverend hair and solemn beard,  
A sprig or flower-bud at his button-hole,  
Would sit, his grandchild's tiny hand in his,  
Listening and musing,—musing most, I thought,—  
Patient if not improved, until the close.  
I came to like the man—who liked him not?—  
And watched his tall grey figure as he passed  
Seaward along the bright side of the street,—  
Wee flax-head trotting gaily at his side  
In crimson cloak and buckled crimson shoes ;—  
Watched, and surprised him on the breezy downs  
Poring through lenses o'er the silvery frost

Of lichens on some ice-scored boulder-stone,  
And oft at sunset met, a furlong off,  
His spare stretched shadow on the glittering sands,  
And then himself—the little one asleep,  
Nestled in flaxen hair and hoary beard.

The village folk, with that blank bovine stare  
Which never seems to see the thing it scans,  
Observed and gossiped, wondered, and surmised,  
But found no evil in the lonely man  
Whose life seemed wholly bound up in his child ;  
And, tired of vain conjecture, grew content  
To love him merely, and let him hold his way  
Mysterious and unquestioned. So the year  
From autumn round to autumn rolled ; and then,  
Whether it were he felt the social need  
Or simply liked me out of liberal heart,  
The Doctor lost his strangeness and reserve,  
At length cast all the anchors of his trust,  
Nor found me lack that gracious temper of youth  
Which worships lofty aims in patient lives.  
A poet, heart and brain, the man but lived  
To write one book which no man yet had dared ;  
One life-work, one colossal poem, fraught  
With all the joy and travail of mankind,

Enriched with all the lore of all the years—  
“The Epic of the Pageants of the World.”  
Smiling, 'twas so he named it for the nonce ;  
And truly as he sat in dreamy mood  
And sketched the vasty outlines of his theme,  
I, grown from very sympathy a bard,  
Saw, as he spoke, strange masquerades of Time  
Sweep past in awful splendour.

Years had fled,  
Ay, forty years of florid life, since first  
He planned this large majestic epopee ;  
And years must still be spent in search and  
thought ;  
And years, perchance, in waiting, sail outspread,  
To catch the ever-imminent breeze of song ;  
Years on the voyage through that sea of dreams ;  
Years—and the man who had thought and wrought,  
too rapt  
To note the years, forgot that he was old !  
Small wonder ! For his eye, grown keen to scan  
The cosmic cycles from the nebular dawn,  
Was dulled to human epochs, mortal dates.  
Why, Rome was thatched and fenced but yesterday !

The Pyramids were reared—a year ago?  
Nay, mark, those fiery-blossomed weeds have  
    flamed

Along the furrows of an Aryan plough ;  
These ripples wash the self-same water-line  
As when the dwellers on the reed-roofed piles  
Moulded clay crescents of the holy Moon !

What pageants these of his ! He spoke of Art ;—  
And the sea-crinkled, ice-cragged, palm-plumed  
    world

Spread like a marvellous map before the eye ;  
And vaguely seen in dimly shimmering light,  
Lo ! Man the Artist wrought. Before his cave  
Th' autochthon sketched upon a mammoth's tooth  
The picture of a mammoth, chipped the flint  
To shape of prehistoric man or beast.

Tribes perished, forests crumbled, sea and land  
Changed places, and the stars changed colour and  
    place

In changing skies, but Man the Artist lived—  
Scratched, whittled, painted, grew in eye and hand ;  
Pictured the river-bluffs, the rocky walls  
Of sea-carved creeks, the snow-capped precipice,  
The ice-borne boulder on the tropic isle,

Till sun and moon, fish, reptile, bird and flower,  
Mammal and Man, on ivory, slate, horn, rock,  
Ringed with strange zodiacs all the savage globe !  
And nations perished, cities rose and fell,  
And Man the Artist lived and wrought and throve,  
Grew bold in thought and opulent in means,  
Survived all wreck, till Titian, Raphael came—  
For life indeed is short and art is long !

All this was but an episode—conceive !—  
In some transcendent pageant he had named  
“The Song of Colour.” He began his strain  
Far backward in the green Devonian Age,  
When no bright blossom hung on any tree  
Its crimson petals or its golden bell ;  
No single fruit gleamed ruddy in the sun,  
But all the jungle-waste of primal growth,  
Gigantic marestails, ferns, and ancient pines,  
Rolled one susurrent sea of endless green ;  
And giant May-flies poised on gauzy wing  
O'er tepid swamps, and antique grasshoppers  
Chirruped the oldest music of the world.  
Threading that green and gloomy forest floor,  
He marked, as emerald age succeeded age,  
The slowly kindling dawn of sylvan love ;

The pines and cycads sighed with tender need,  
The grasses beckoned with their feathery plumes,  
And whispered, "Hasten, sweetest, or we die."  
And through the woods for centuries the wind  
Drifted the amorous pollen, till the waste  
Was checked by Colour, and th' instinctive tree  
Hung out its lamps of blossom, wooed and won  
The aid of myriad-murmuring insect swarms  
In the vast stress and strain of leafy life ;—  
Hung out its glowing fruit, that beast and bird  
Might guard its life, assist its kindly race  
In conquest of the hungry continents.  
So kindled through the centuries the world !  
For love of brilliant food awoke a love  
For brilliant mates ; and beetle and butterfly  
Changed into creeping gem and fluttering flower,  
And feather and fur were shot with luring tints ;  
And plucking from the hospitable boughs  
A coloured feast, the ancestry of Man  
Bequeathed to Man the love of coloured things,  
And Man became the Artist.

Such he deemed

The genesis of Art—so vast the time,  
So slow and subtly intricate the toil,  
Ere God could make a Raphaël! Ponder that !



Sublime it was but sad, this tardy growth,  
This infinite waste of means to shape an end,  
This frigid scorn of time, this recklessness  
Of life potential and of potent life.  
Nature, he felt, was ruthless, tyrannous,  
Extravagant of pain ; and in a song,  
BLOSSOM AND BABE, he touched the human stop  
In the vast organ-music of his theme.

BLOSSOM AND BABE.

*O happy little English cot ! O rustic-sweet vignette  
Of red brick walls and thatched roof, in apple-  
blossom set !*

*O happy Devon meadows, how you come to me again !  
And I am riding as I rode along the cool green lane,  
A-dreaming and a-dreaming ; and behold ! I see once  
more*

*The fair young mother with her babe beside the  
shaded door.*

*How bright it was ! No blossom trembled in the  
hot blue noon,  
And grasshoppers were thrilling all the drowsy  
heart of June !*

*O babe upon the bosom, O blossom on the tree !*

*And as I passed, the stridulous incessant jangle ran  
Along the hedgerow following me, until my brain  
began*

*To mingle in a waking dream the baby at the breast,  
The woman and the apple-bloom, the shrilly sounding  
pest,—*

*To blend them with that great green age of trees  
which never shed*

*A bell of gold or purple or a petal of white or red,  
When all the music of the world—a world too young  
to sing—*

*Was such a piercing riot made by such an insect  
wing.*

*O babe upon the bosom, O blossom on the tree!*

*And then I thought of all the ages, all the waste of  
power,*

*That went to tinge one pulpy fruit, to flush one little  
flower ;*

*And just in this same wise, I mused, the Human too  
must grow*

*Through waste of life, through blood and tears,  
through centuries of woe,*

*To reach the perfect—flower and fruit ; for Nature  
does not scan,*

*More than the individual tree, the individual man;  
A myriad blossoms shall be lavished, if but one shall  
give*

*The onward impulse to the thought that Nature  
means to live.*

*O babe upon the bosom, O blossom on the tree!*

*O fair young mother, far removed from visions of  
unrest,*

*Be happy in the baby blossom flushing at thy  
breast!*

*The blessed condition thine, that thou canst never  
see*

*The strife, the cruel waste, the cyclic growth in man  
and tree;*

*That thou canst trust a heart, more kind than ever  
Nature shows,*

*Will gather each baby bloom that falls, will cherish  
each that blows;*

*Canst need no solace from the faith, that since the  
world began*

*The Brute hath reached the Human through the  
martyrdom of man.*

*O babe upon the bosom, O blossom on the tree!*

Why should I tire you with his dreams? And yet  
To me they bring the saddest hours I know.  
His pageant of migrations—swarming hosts  
Of plant, beast, insect, man, in ceaseless march  
Netting with footprints all the restless world  
Age after age ; his vision of the tombs—  
Caves, barrows, rings and avenues of stone,  
Ship-mounds and pyramids, by sea-washed shore,  
Far inland, by the river, in the waste,  
On snow-peaked mountain and on grassy plain,  
On continent and isle, here one all lone,  
There grouped in multitudes, till all the earth  
Seemed one vast graveyard whence the Spirit of  
    Man  
Cried unto God for immortality ;  
His pageant of the altars—yearning arms  
Stretched to the spirits of the kindly dead,  
The blood-drenched idols and the shrieking fires,  
The magic drums—why speak of these, of aught ?  
The song of BLOSSOM AND BABE was all he wrote  
Of this stupendous Epic of the World.  
Last spring he died, left me his grandchild there,  
His fossils, books, and manuscripts. The last  
I searched with eagerness, and found the song—  
A single arrow-head in heaps of flakes,

Notes, observations, comments, chips of thought !  
His heart was light unto the last : he felt  
A joyous confidence that all was well.  
No premonition saddened his decline ;  
And, dying, he believed in years of love  
To lavish on his poem and his child.  
The mighty Epic that had filled his brain,  
Absorbed his very being forty years,  
He took away with him. A larger life  
May yield it larger utterance—who can tell ?

Yes, give them to the gentleman, my dear !

## THROUGH THE AGES.

‡ A LEGEND OF A STONE AXE.

O'ER the swamp in the forest  
The sunset is red ;  
And the sad reedy waters,  
In black mirrors spread,  
Are aflame with the great crimson tree-tops o'er-  
head.

By the swamp in the forest  
The oak-branches groan,  
As the Savage primeval,  
With russet hair thrown  
O'er his huge naked limbs, swings his hatchet of  
stone.

By the swamp in the forest  
Sings shrilly in glee  
The stark forester's lass  
Plucking mast in a tree—  
And hairy and brown as a squirrel is she !

With the strokes of the flint axe  
The blind woodland rings,  
And the echoes laugh back as  
The sylvan girl sings :—  
And the Sabre-tooth growls in his lair ere he  
springs !

Like two stars of green splendour,  
His great eyeballs burn  
As he crawls !—Chilled to silence,  
The girl can discern  
The fierce pantings which thrill through the fronds  
of the fern.

And the brown frolic face of  
The girl has grown white,  
As the large fronds are swayed in  
The weird crimson light,  
And she sobs with the strained throbbing dumb-  
ness of fright.

With his blue eyes a gleam, and  
 His wild russet hair  
 Streaming back, the Man travails,  
 Unwarned, unaware  
 Of the lithe shape that crouches, the green eyes  
 that glare.

And now, hark ! as he drives with  
 A last mighty swing  
 The stone blade of the axe through  
 The oak's central ring,  
 From the blanched lips what screams of wild  
 agony spring !—

There's a rush through the fern-fronds—  
 A yell of affright—  
 And the Savage and Sabre-tooth  
 Close in fierce fight :—  
 And the red sunset smoulders and blackens to night.

On the swamp in the forest  
 One clear star is shown,  
 And the reeds fill the night with  
 A long troubled moan—  
 And the girl sits and sobs in the darkness, alone !

. . . . .



The great dim centuries of long ago  
Sweep past with rain and fire, with wind and snow,  
And where the Savage swung his axe of stone  
The blue clay silts on Titan trunks o'erthrown,  
O'er mammoth's tusks, in river-horse's lair;  
And, armed with deer-horn, clad in girdled hair,  
A later savage in his hollow tree  
Hunts the strange broods of a primeval sea.

And yet the great dim centuries again  
Sweep past with snow and fire, with wind and rain  
And where that warm primeval ocean rolled  
A second forest buds,—blooms broad,—grows old;  
And a new race of prehistoric men  
Springs from the mystic soil, and once again  
Fades like a wood mist through the woodlands hoar.

For lo! the great dim centuries once more  
With wind and fire, with rain and snow sweep by;  
And where the forest stood, an empty sky  
Arches with lonely blue a lonely land.  
The great white stilted storks in silence stand  
Far from each other, motionless as stone,  
And melancholy leagues of marsh-reeds moan,  
And dead tarns blacken 'neath the mournful blue.

The ages speed ! And now the skin canoe  
 Darts with swift paddle through the drear morass,  
 But ere the painted fisherman can pass,  
 The brazen horns ring out ; a thund'rous throng—  
 Bronzed faces, brazen helmets—sweeps along,  
 The silver Eagles flash and disappear  
 Across the Roman causeway !

Year by year

The dim time lapses till that vesper hour  
 Broods o'er the summer lake with peaceful power,  
 When the carved galley through the sunset floats,  
 The rowers, with chains of gold about their throats,  
 Hang on their dripping oars, and sweet and clear  
 The sound of singing steals across the mere,  
 And rising with glad face and outstretched hand,  
 " Row, Knights, a little nearer to the land,  
 And let us hear these monks of Ely sing ;"  
 Says KNUT, the King.

In the dim years what fateful hour arrives,  
 And who is this rides Fenward from St Ives ?  
 A man of massive presence,—bluff and stern.  
 Beneath their craggy brows his deep eyes burn  
 With awful thoughts and purposes sublime.  
 The face is one to abash the front of time,—

Hewn of red rock, so vital, even now  
One sees the wart above that shaggy brow.  
At Ely there in these idyllic days  
His sickles reap, his sheep and oxen graze,  
And all the ambition of his sober life  
Is but to please Elizabeth his wife,  
To drain the Fens—and magnify the Lord.  
So in his plain cloth suit, with close-tucked sword,  
OLIVER CROMWELL, fated but unknown,  
Rides where the Savage swung his axe of stone.

. . . . .  
In the class-room blue-eyed Phemie  
Sits, half listening, hushed and dreamy,  
To the grey-haired pinched Professor droning to  
his class of girls.

And around her in their places  
Rows of arch and sweet young faces  
Seem to fill the air with colour shed from eyes  
and lips and curls!—

Eyes of every shade of splendour,  
Brown and bashful, blue and tender,  
Grey and giddy, black and throbbing with a deep  
impassioned light :

Golden ringlets, raven clusters,  
Auburn braids with sunny lustres  
Falling on white necks, plump shoulders clothed  
in green and blue and white.

And the sun with leafy reflex  
Of the rustling linden-tree flecks  
All the glass doors of the cases ranged along the  
class-room wall—

Flecks with shadow and gold the Teacher's  
Thin grey hair and worn pinched features, :  
And the pupils' heads, and sends a thrill of July  
over all.

And the leafy golden tremor  
Witches so the blue-eyed dreamer  
That the room seems filling straightway with a  
forest green and old ;

And the grey Professor's speech is  
Heard like wind among the beeches  
Murmuring wondrous cosmic secrets never quite  
distinctly told ;

And the girls around seem turning  
Into trees—laburnums burning,  
Graceful ashes, silver birches—but through all the  
glamour and change

Phemie is conscious that those cases  
Hold reliques of vanished races,  
The pre-Adamitic fossils of a dead world grim and  
strange.

Labelled shells suggest the motion,  
Moan, and glimmer of that ocean  
Where the belemnites dropped spindles and the  
sand-stars shed their rays ;

Monstrous birds stalk stilted by as  
She perceives the slab of Trias  
Scrawled with hieroglyphic claw -tracks of the  
mesozoic days ;

And before her she sees dawn a  
Pageant of an awful fauna  
While across Silurian ages the Professor's lecture  
blows.

All the while a soft and pleasant  
Rustle of dresses, an incessant  
Buzz of smothered frolic rises underneath his  
meagre nose.

And one pretty plague has during  
All the class been caricaturing  
Her short-sighted good old Master with a world  
of wicked zest ;

And the madcaps blush and titter  
As they see the unconscious sitter  
Sketched as Allophylian Savage—spectacled but  
much undressed.

But the old man turns the pages  
Of the rock-illumined ages,  
Tracing from earth's mystic missal the antiquity of  
Man :

*Not six thousand years—but eras,  
Ages, eons disappear as  
Groping back we touch the system where the Human  
first began.*

*Centuries, as we retrogress, are  
Dwarfed to days, says the Professor,  
And our lineage was hoary ere Eve's apple-tree grew  
green;*

*For the Bee, whose drowsy humming  
Was prophetic of Man's coming,  
Lies in gem-like tomb of amber, buried in the  
Miocene.*

*At what point Man came, I know not,  
Logic proves not, fossils show not,  
But his dim remote existence is a fact beyond  
dispute.*

*Look!—And from among some thirty  
Arrow barbs of quartz and chert he  
Takes the flint head of a hatchet,—and the girls  
grow hushed and mute.*

*Old, he says, art thou strange stone! Nor  
Less antique thy primal owner!  
When the Fens were drained this axe was found  
below two forests sunk.*

*Underneath a bed of sea clay  
And two forests this relique lay  
Where some Allophylian Savage left it in a half-  
hewn trunk!*

Does the old Professor notice  
Large eyes, blue as myosotis,  
Raised to him in startled wonder as those fateful  
words are said?

But for Phemie, through the trees in  
Her dream forest, fact and reason  
Blend with fancy, and her vision grows complete  
and clear and dread:

By the swamp in the forest  
The sylvan girl sings  
As his flint-headed hatchet  
The wild Woodman swings,  
But the hatchet cleaves fast in the trunk he has  
riven—  
The Man stands unarmed as the Sabre-tooth  
springs!



## THE DEATH OF ANAXAGORAS.

“Lampsacum postea profectus, illic diem suum obiit; ubi rogantibus eum principibus civitatis, Numquid fieri mandaret, jussisse ferunt ut pueri quotannis quo mense defecisset ludere permetterentur, servarique et hodie consuetudinem.”—DIOG. LAERT., De Vita Philosoph. ; Anaxagoras.

CLEON of Lampsacus to Pericles:—

Of him she banished now let Athens  
boast;  
Let now th’ Athenians raise to him they stoned  
A statue;—*Anaxagoras is dead!*

To you who mourn the Master, called him friend,  
Beat back th’ Athenian wolves who fanged his  
throat,  
And risked your own to save him,—Pericles—  
I now unfold the manner of his end.

The aged man, who found in sixty years  
Scant cause for laughter, laughed before he died  
And died still smiling :—Athens vexed him not !  
Not he, but your Athenians, he would say,  
Were banished in his exile !

When the dawn

First glimmers white o'er Lesser Asia,  
And little birds are twittering in the grass,  
And all the sea lies hollow and grey with mist,  
And in the streets the ancient watchmen doze,  
The Master woke with cold. His feet were chill  
And reft of sense ; and we who watched him knew  
The fever had not wholly left his brain,  
For he was wandering, seeking nests of birds—  
An urchin from the green Ionian town  
Where he was born. We chafed his clay-cold limbs ;  
And so he dozed, nor dreamed, until the sun  
Laughed out—broad day—and flushed the garden  
    gods  
Who bless our fruits and vines in Lampsacus.  
Feeble, but sane and cheerful, he awoke  
And took our hands and asked to feel the sun ;  
And where the ilex spreads a gracious shade  
We placed him, wrapped and pillowed ; and he  
    heard

The charm of birds, the social whisper of vines,  
The ripple of the blue Propontic sea.  
Placid and pleased he lay ;—but we were sad  
To see the snowy hair and silver beard  
Like withering mosses on a fallen oak,  
And feel that he, whose vast philosophy  
Had cast such sacred branches o'er the fields  
Where Athens pastures her dull sheep, lay fallen  
And never more should know the spring !

Confess,

You too had grieved to see it, Pericles !  
But Anaxagoras owned no sense of wrong ;  
And when we called the plagues of all your  
    gods  
On your ungrateful city, he but smiled :  
“ Be patient, children ! Where would be the gain  
Of wisdom and divine astronomy,  
Could we not school our fretful minds to bear  
The ills all life inherits ? *I* can smile  
To think of Athens ! Were they much to blame ?  
Had I not slain Apollo ? Plucked the beard  
Of Jove himself ? Poor rabble, who have yet  
Outgrown so little the green grasshoppers  
From whom they boast descent,—are they to  
    blame ?

How could they dream,—or how believe when  
taught—

The sun a red-hot iron ball, in bulk  
Not less than Peloponnesus? How believe  
The moon, no silver goddess girt for chace,  
But earth and stones, with caverns, hills, and vales?  
Poor grasshoppers! who deem the gods absorbed  
In all their babble, shrilling in the grass,  
What wonder if they rage, should one but hint  
That thunder and lightning, born of clashing clouds,  
Might happen even with Jove in pleasant mood,—  
Not thinking of Athenians at all!”

He paused; and blowing softly from the sea,  
The fresh wind stirred the ilex, shaking down  
Through chinks of sunny leaves blue gems of sky;  
And lying in the shadow, all his mind  
O'ershadowed by our grief, once more he spoke:—  
“Let not your hearts be troubled! All my days  
Hath all my care been fixed on this vast blue  
So still above us; now my days are done,  
Let it have care of me! Be patient; meek;  
Not puffed with doctrine! Nothing can be known;  
Nought grasped for certain; sense is circumscribed;  
The intellect is weak; and life is short!”

He ceased and mused a little, while we wept.  
“And yet be nowise downcast ; seek, pursue ;  
The lover’s rapture and the sage’s gain  
Less in attainment lie than in approach.  
Look forward to the time which is to come !  
All things are mutable ; and change alone  
Unchangeable. But knowledge grows ! The gods  
Are drifting from the earth like morning mist ;  
The days are surely at the doors when men  
Shall see but human actions in the world !  
Yea, even these hills of Lampsacus shall be  
The isles of some new sea, if time not fail !”

And now the reverend fathers of our town  
Had heard the Master’s end was very near,  
And came to do him homage at the close,  
And ask what wish of his they might fulfil.  
But he, divining that they thought his heart  
Might yearn to Athens for a resting-place,  
Said gently : “Nay, from everywhere the way  
To that dark land you wot of is the same.  
I feel no care ; I have no wish. The Greeks  
Will never quite forget my Pericles,  
And when they think of him will say of me,  
*’Twas Anaxagoras taught him !*”

Loath to go,  
No kindly office done, yet once again  
The reverend fathers pressed him for a wish.  
Then laughed the Master: "Nay, if still you urge,  
And since 'twere churlish to reject goodwill,  
I pray you, every year when time brings back  
The month in which I left you, let the boys—  
All boys and girls in this your happy town—  
Be free of task and school for that one month."

He lay back smiling, and the reverend men  
Departed, heavy at heart. He spoke no more,  
But haply musing on his truant days,  
Passed from us, and was smiling when he died.

---

Thus wrote to Pericles from Lampsacus  
The poet Cleon; and the Master's words,  
Wherein he spoke of change unchangeable,  
Hold good for great things but hold ill for small;  
For lo! six hundred fateful years have sped  
And Greece is but a Roman province now,  
Whereas through those six centuries, year by year  
When summer and the sun brought back the time,

The lads and lasses, free of task and school,  
Have held their revelry in Lampsacus,—  
A fact so ripe with grave moralities,  
That I, Diogenes, have deemed it fit  
To note in my "DE VITA ET MORIBUS."

## THE LATTER LAW.

## I.

WHEN, schooled to resignation, I had ceased  
 To yearn for my lost Eden; when I  
 knew

No loving Spirit brooded in the blue,  
 And none should see His coming in the East,  
 I looked for comfort in my creed; I sought  
 To draw all nature nearer, to replace  
 The sweet old myths, the tenderness, the grace  
 Of God's dead world of faith and reverent thought.

Oh, joy! I found the stern new Law reveal  
 Romance more rare than poesy creates:  
 Your blood, it said, is kindred with the sap  
 Which throbs within the cedar, and mayhap  
 In some dim wise the tree reciprocates,  
 Even as a Dryad, all the love you feel!



## II.

You and the great glad Earth are kith and kin,  
There is one base, one scheme of life, one hope  
On that and this side of the microscope.  
All things, now wholes, have parts of many been,  
And all shall be. A disk of Homer's blood  
May redden a daisy on an English lawn,  
And what was Chaucer glimmer in the dawn  
To-morrow o'er the plains where Ilium stood.

No jot is lost, or scorned, or disallowed ;  
One Law reigns over all. Take you no care,  
For while all beings change one life endures,  
And a new cycle waits for you and yours  
To melt away, like streaks of morning cloud,  
Into the infinite azure of things that were.

## III.

And soon the selfish clinging unto sense,  
The longing that this ME should never fail,  
Loosed quivering hands, for oh! of what avail  
Were such survival of intelligence,  
If all the great and good of days gone by—  
Plato, Hypatia, Shakespeare—had surceased,  
Had mingled with the cloud, the plant, the  
beast,  
And God were but a mythos of the sky?

And when I thought, o'ershadowed with strange  
awe,  
How Christ was dead—had ceased in utter woe,  
With that great cry "Forsaken!" on the  
cross,  
I felt at first a sense of bitter loss,  
And then grew passive, saying, "Be it so!  
'Tis one with Christ and Judas. 'Tis the law!"

IV.

But when my child, my one girl-babe lay dead—  
The blossom of me, my dream and my desire—  
And unshed tears burned in my eyes like fire,  
And when my wife subdued her sobs, and said—  
*Oh! husband, do not grieve, be comforted,*  
*She is with Christ!*—I laughed in my despair.  
With Christ! O God! and where is Christ,  
and where  
My poor dead babe? And where the countless  
dead?

The great glad Earth—my kin!—is glad as though  
No child had ever died; the heaven of May  
Leans like a laughing face above my grief.  
Is *she* clean lost for ever? How shall I know?  
O Christ! art thou still Christ? And shall I  
pray  
For fulness of belief or unbelief?



## THE GOD AND THE SCHOOLBOY.

THROUGHOUT the land and sea from ancient days

The wonder had been rumoured, that the god  
 Born on the radiant hills i' the dazzle of dawn—  
 Asklepios—healed the sick and raised the dead.  
 The world gave credence gladly. Human faith  
 With human anguish grew; and, doubtless, God  
 Was pitiful in heaven, when unaware  
 Of Whom they sought, men called Asklepios.

Thus, four-and-twenty centuries ago,  
 At Epidaurus, on that rocky point  
 Washed north and south with violet sea, the sick  
 Struck sail. Beyond the corn-fields, vineyards,  
     olive-groves  
 And hamlets of the Dusty-feet—for so  
 Our townsmen named the rustic folk who tilled

The sweet brown earth 'twixt mountain-cirque and  
sea—

A green gorge opened on the beautiful  
Hushed valley in the flowery heart o' the hills,  
Where, throned on gold and ivory, the god—  
Chryselephantine, mighty-bearded, ringed  
With golden head-rays—held his knotty staff  
In one hand, and in one his serpent, wreathed  
In shining coils, while near his footstool lay  
The first dumb friend man found among the brute.

Oh, beautiful among the purple peaks  
Glittered the long white marble terrace-walls,  
The pillared aisles, the gardens of the god,  
The altars white, and white immortal shapes  
Half-seen in fragrant bowers where pine and plane  
Assuaged with shade the jewelled blaze of noon.

And hither out of furthest lands and isles  
Amid remote dim sea-ways came the blind,  
The dumb, the deaf, the palsied, scald, and  
maimed—

All loathsome shapes of pain and broken strength  
And hopeless wasting—if perchance the god  
Might heal their stricken bodies.

Shafts of stone

Bore of the midnight vision and the cure  
Full many a marvellous record. One who came  
From far green-gardened Lampsacus the god  
Had graciously made whole ; from Halike—  
A town whereof none now in all the world  
Aught knoweth save the graven name—came one ;  
And one from cold Torone in the north,  
From joyous Mytilene one, and one  
From that Hermione, whence Hades-ward  
So short the downward way that never coin  
Is laid upon the dead man's tongue to pay  
The shadowy oarsman.

But within the shrine

Hung costly gifts of men made glad to live—  
Great vases, gems and mirrors ; jewelled eyes,  
Fingers of silver, arms and legs of gold ;  
Rich models of invaluable parts,  
And precious images of fleshly ills  
From which no quittance were too highly priced ;  
And, mixed with these, rude gifts of grateful hearts  
Whose poverty was not ashamed to give.

Upon a time, among the folk who sought  
Surcease of suffering from Asklepios,  
Was brought a schoolboy from the white-walled  
town

Upon the rocky point—Euphanes—frail,  
And fever-flushed, and weak with grievous pain ;  
And as the lad, beneath the clement stars,  
Lay wandering in his mind, and dreamed per-  
chance

Of sailing little triremes on the shore,  
Or making, it might be, a locust-cage  
With reeds and stalks of asphodel beneath  
The trellised vines, it seemed as though the god  
Stood by him in the holy night and spoke :—  
“What wilt thou give me, little playfellow,  
If I shall cure thy sickness?” And the lad,  
Thinking what pleasure schoolboys have in these,  
Replied : “I’ll give thee my ten marbles, god !”  
Asklepios laughed, right gladdened with the gift,  
And said : “Then, truly, I will make thee well !”  
And lo ! when morning whitened on the hills,  
And in the valley’s dusk the sacred cock  
Clapped wings and sang, the urchin went forth  
whole !

Full four-and-twenty centuries ago  
Euphanes saw the god ; and yesterday  
The pillar bearing record of the cure  
Was dug from wreck of war and drift of years.  
*“ Ten marbles ! quoth the child. Asklepios laughed ;  
But on the morrow forth the lad went whole.”*  
Thus closely had the Greek in ancient times—  
Through some prophetic prompting of pure love  
God’s unfulfilled events divining—drawn  
Man’s heart unto the human heart in God.



## AN INDIAN COWRIE.

(FOUND IN A CORNISH BARROW AT THE  
LAND'S END.)

A GENTLE creature grew  
Within this cell of pearly blue—  
How many centuries ago  
No seer can tell us. We can only know  
It found life pleasant, moved, and took its ease  
By palmy island shores in distant Indian seas.

The world has changed since then !  
Tongues have died out ; and tribes of men  
Have clamoured, and have passed away,  
Like crow-flights through the sunset of a day ;  
No pillar marks where gorgeous cities fell ;  
But this small speechless life hath left its storied  
shell.

What matters now to seek  
How man in that dim dawn antique  
First owned it ; whether fisher spread  
His snare of palm-tree leaves and baited thread,  
Or leaf-girt negress, whistling in her speech,  
Gathered an empty husk upon a tangled beach ?

It profits not ; and yet,  
Methinks, some cave-dwarf, carved in jet,  
With blubber lips and woolly hair,  
Wagged a huge head, as at some Aryan fair,  
He bartered for a shred, a copper bead,  
This shell, whose story is a world's, could we but  
read.

How many a kindred hand  
Hath, as it passed from land to land,  
Touched it, and left a pulse to thrill  
The Aryan blood which leaps within us still ;  
What memories of all that then befell  
Are, like an Iliad, shut within this little shell !

Apply it to your ear,  
And listen !—No, you cannot *hear* ;

Yet how the arrow-heads of stone  
Sang ; how the bronze swords rang ; how shriek  
and groan

Followed the stone celt's thud, as wave by wave,  
The Aryan exodus for ever westward drave ?

For ever westward ! New  
Wild worlds still opened ; but the Blue  
That brooded o'er them was the same  
Unchanging God that brooded whence they  
came.

For ever westward ! And the shell was cast  
Westward ; and great fresh waves still swept be-  
yond the last.

Across the infinite plains  
White cattle draw the lumbering wains ;  
Huge lop-eared mastiffs guard and keep  
The silky goats and heavy hornèd sheep ;  
Dark lines of life crawl where the great lakes shine,  
And close against the sunset creeps a fainter line.

The rosy peaks of snow  
Arise, and like a pageant go ;

Primeval forest, pathless fen,  
Dragons, and hordes of brutal-visaged men  
Fleet past; and ever where the dark lines turn,  
In sudden fields of wheat the scarlet poppies burn.

Hark! in the dead of night,  
What cries are these? What crimson light  
Leaps o'er the mere, and redly streaks  
The snowy pine-wood and the icy peaks?  
What splashing paddles these?—The morn will  
break  
On tree-piled hovels smouldering in an Alpine lake.

Still westward! And the sun,  
Burning o'er Jutland, has begun  
To bleach the many-cycled firs!  
A fresher life-sap through the forest stirs,  
And tall and green the little oaks have grown  
Round the Bronze Man at death-grips with the  
Man of Stone!

What year was it that blew  
The Aryan's wicker-work canoe  
Which brought the shell to English land?  
What prehistoric man or woman's hand,

With what intent, consigned it to this grave—  
This barrow set in sound of the Ancient World's  
last wave?

Beside it in the mound  
A charmèd bead of flint was found.  
Some woman surely in this place,  
Covered with flowers a little baby-face,  
And laid the cowrie on the cold dead breast ;  
And, weeping, turned for comfort to the landless  
West?

Was it a jewel meant  
To mark deep love or high descent ;  
A many-virtued amulet ;  
A sign to know the child by when they met ;  
A coin for that last journey through the night—  
A coin of little worth, a childless widow's mite?

No man shall ever know !  
It happened all so long ago  
That this same childless woman may  
Have stood upon the cliffs around the bay  
And watched for tin-ships that no longer came,  
Nor knew that Carthage had gone down in Roman  
flame.

## THE WOODWELE.

I HEAR you in the orchard hid in clouds of  
apple-flower,

I hear you tapping, tapping, busy Woodwele, in  
my tree ;

My heart is glad to hear you in this golden morn-  
ing hour,

Your tapping is—you cannot know, how sweet  
a sound to me.

The old man hears you, and he lifts his head as  
white as snow,

And dreams he is the passionate heart of fifty years  
ago !

The glad church bells were ringing then as they  
are ringing now ;

The orchard was in bloom, and there was Sun-  
day in the air ;

My dear love's face was sweeter than the blossom  
on the bough—

'Twas bluest May-time in her eyelids and her  
golden hair !

We leaned together, lips to lips ; we heard, but  
could not see,

A Woodwele—'twas not *you*, friend—tapping in  
that apple-tree !

Although 'twas Sunday, still, I thought, no Sab-  
bath-breaker he ;

And though to-day is Sunday too, no Sabbath-  
breaker you ;

You cannot break, but you can make, a holy day  
for me :

Your tapping crowds my trees with bloom, and  
fills my skies with blue.

I hear you, and my cheek is flushed ; my button-  
hole is gay ;

I stride erect—what need have I of any staff to-day ?

Oh, Woodwele, with the laughing note, I feel my  
heart beat fast,

My eyes are dim, my cheek is wet, my head  
grows white again ;

For I remember, in the light of that long-vanished  
past,

How kindly Life has dealt with me, how hard  
with better men.

For those church bells, that orchard bloom, that  
Woodwele in the tree,

And all that plighted happiness have kept their  
pledge to me !

My dear love's eyes are faded and her face is  
wrinkled now,

And all the golden colour changed to silver in  
her hair ;

But when she smiles—ah, *then* you see the blos-  
som on the bough ;

And when she speaks, you feel a sense of May-  
time in the air !

Through all disguise, my dear old wife, be sure  
I see and know

The pretty maid who loved a poet fifty years ago.



## PARTING.

**W**HERE'ER you go, on ground or grass,  
 May ne'er you lack a loving lass,  
 With tender lips and honest eyes,  
 To make you happy and keep you wise—  
 Where'er you go.

Where'er you go, on grass or ground,  
 No truer maid will e'er be found  
 Than she, whose heart will follow you  
 With love and sorrow enough for two—  
 And will you go?

Where'er you go—(oh, foolish eyes  
 Let not the blinding tears arise !)  
 Where'er you go—(for maidhood's sake,  
 Oh heart, be quiet, and do not break !)—  
 You shall not go !

## MORNING.

**O**H, glad and red, the light of morn  
 Across the field of battle broke,  
 And showed the waste of trampled corn  
 And smouldering farmsteads wrapped in smoke;  
 And cold and stark the soldier lay,  
 Shot down beside his shattered gun;  
 And, grimly splashed with blood and clay,  
 His face looked ghastly in the sun.

Oh, glad and red, the morning shone  
 In happy England far away,  
 Where knelt a bright-haired little one  
 Beside her mother's knee to pray;  
 And prompting each fond faltering word,  
 The soldier's wife was glad and smiled—  
 She knew not 'twas a widow heard  
 The prattle of an orphan child.

Oh, glad and red, oh, glad and red  
The morning light glowed everywhere :  
And one beam touched the father dead,  
And one the child who knelt in prayer ;  
And from the trampled corn and clay—  
A skylark sprang with joyous breast—  
For shot and shell had spared that day  
Its four brown eggs and little nest.

## SONG.

**H**OW should you my true love know  
From another one?  
Rosy face and breast of snow  
Cannot make her known.

Brightest hair and bluest eyes  
Cannot be a sign—  
Many men might recognise  
Other maids than mine.

But if you the fairest scan,  
My true love is she  
Who can jest with any man—  
Any man but me.

When we meet with whispered names,  
Grave and hushed she grows  
At the thought of all she claims—  
All that she bestows!

## SONG.

**R**INGED with blue mountains,  
 Oft when a little lad  
 Dreamed I of something glad  
     Hidden beyond ;  
 Ships and the shining sea,  
 Towns and towers haunted me,  
 Dreams made me glad and sad—  
     Life lay beyond !

Ringed with blue welkin,  
 Oft now, as when a lad,  
 Dream I of something glad  
     Hidden beyond ;  
 Something I cannot see  
 Haunts and entices me ;  
 Dreams make me glad and sad—  
     What lies beyond ?

## THE LEGEND OF THE ARK.

## I.—THE GREAT WITNESS.

“And God saw that the wickedness of man was great in the earth. . . . And it repented the Lord that He had made man on the earth, and it grieved Him at His heart. And the Lord said, I will destroy man whom I have created from the face of the earth; both man, and beast, and the creeping thing, and the fowls of the air.”

**L**O! sixteen centuries had passed away!

When God drove forth the pair, they fell a prey  
 To darkness and the panic of the night.  
 On three sides crouched their dread. In front, a  
 light—  
 A fire—a sword smote every way to keep,  
 The Tree of Life. Their terror made them creep  
 Nearer the sword. They maddened to escape  
 The horror without hands and without shape  
 That lurked in nature, waiting them. The twain  
 Crept closer. ’Twere less dreadful to be slain

By that fierce splendour, in each other's sight,  
Than perish in the vast unhuman night.  
They lay beneath the sword ; they felt the wind  
It made.

This Man and Woman were mankind.

The sword showed him the Woman's face, showed her  
The Man's. They shrank apart. Their faces were  
More fearful than the darkness, than the sword.

Then God in pity gave them fire ; the Lord  
Gave them the fire for solace and a stay.

When sixteen hundred years had passed away  
The whole earth was fulfilled of evil and woe.

The Man and Woman wandered to and fro  
In hordes and tribes and nations. They did eat  
Of every beast and tree. The track of feet  
Lay wide through polar snow and tropic sand.  
No ocean beat on any utmost land  
But some wild fisher watched the heaving blue.  
Tribes thronged the sunset and the dawn. They  
knew

The glow of arctic and antarctic skies.  
In savage lands they lived in wolfish wise.

The tree, the hanging rock, the cavern gave  
Shelter for fire and slumber—and a grave.  
Time changed them—colour and stature, hair and  
skin.

They knew not whence they came. They owned  
no kin.

The Man and Woman in them had forgot  
All ancient days, the sad primeval lot,  
The brotherhood of dust, the sword of fire.

Their god was hunger, and their law desire.

In ancient realms, from golden cities, bright  
With lamps of revel, roared into the night  
The orgies of the giants of the earth.  
And men and beasts, by day, to make them mirth,  
Slew and were slain. Their spearmen, early and late,  
Drove virgin troops from every land to sate  
The tigerish greed of their delirious lust.  
The evil of their fame was blown, like dust—  
A blinding drouth—through all the world's broad  
ways.

And they too had forgot the olden days,  
The kinship of mankind, the sword of fire.

Their god was luxury, their law desire.



Between the cities and the savage waste  
Were men in myriads. These were they who  
chased

The elephant and ostrich ; they who fed  
On marrow of lions on the watershed  
Of mighty rivers ; they who lived on canes  
And locusts ; they who roamed in sail-drawn  
wains

With flocks and herds, and made the heavens  
their fold ;

And serpent-eaters, wearing coils of gold ;  
And fisher-folk, who slept on rafts of logs,  
And throve on river-fish and milk of dogs ;  
And last, in regions green with sun and rain,  
The husbandmen who planted roots and grain,  
And dwelt in huts of water-reeds and mud.  
And all these had forgot the brotherhood  
Of man, the Garden days, the sword of fire.

Their god was turbulence, their law desire.

And now, when after sixteen hundred years,  
Beneath the whole wide heaven men's blood and  
tears

Cried out to God ; and God the Lord looked forth  
And saw the violence that filled the earth,  
The bloody worship and lascivious glee  
Around the boulder and beneath the tree,  
And all men's wickedness, it grieved the Lord  
That He had made man's image. He abhorred  
All flesh on earth, both man and creeping thing,  
And every beast, and bird of every wing.  
And God prepared the vengeance of His rain  
To slay them, that all evil might be slain  
And utterly destroyed before His face.

But Noah, who had walked with God, found  
grace—

Both Noah and his house.

And Noah hewed  
Great trees within the forest, gopher-wood ;  
And mighty oxen travailed through the years  
To draw the timber home.

In all men's ears  
The fame of this and Noah's name made mirth.

But lo ! an ancient of the morn o' the earth—  
Hoary as winter, imperishable as stone,  
O'ershadowing as a cloud which all alone

Glooms half a realm for half a summer day—  
Leaned on his spear, and watched his grandson  
    lay  
The Ark's foundations.

                                    This was that sublime  
Presentment of humanity and time,  
Methuselah—the living man, whose eyes  
Had seen the living Adam. Centuries  
And nations near the figure of his life  
Were dwarfed to pigmy images.

                                    A strife  
Of wrath and sorrow raged within his mind.

He felt himself the conscience of mankind—  
God's evidence against man's evil. Lo !  
Like God he knew if God were just or no.  
His memory was an iron book wherein  
Was graved a thousand years of human sin—  
A thousand years of patience, mercy, love,  
Outraged and scorned.

                                    “Ye clouds, grow great above ;  
Be swift, ye waters, to obey his nod ;  
Break, thou great deep, and rain, thou rain of  
    God !”

Thus spoke he in his wrath, yet while he spoke,  
The motherhood of Eve within him woke.  
What man was he that he should curse the race  
Her breasts had suckled !

Down his rugged face

The great tears of a world-wide pity ran.  
All time and all good men in that one man  
Seemed weeping.

Day by day for many years

That hoary Sorrow, gazing through his tears,  
Watched the long toil, nor spoke to any one.  
But when at last th' enormous work was done,  
And all the Ark was wrought, on that same day  
They saw the man's vast stature rock and sway,  
Then fall his length. Without a cry or groan  
He fell. He fell, as falleth some high stone  
Pillared for worship as a god, and hurled  
Headlong by God.

God took him from a world

All evil ere the doom of evil burst.  
One grief was spared him—he who had seen the first  
Saw not the last o' the race no prayer could save.

The sons of Noah dug his giant grave.

## II.—THE PENITENT.

“For yet seven days, and I will cause it to rain upon the earth. . . . And they went in unto Noah into the ark, two and two of all flesh, wherein is the breath of life : . . . and the Lord shut him in.”

GOD shut him in.

If some great angel came  
By night or day, in wind or cloud or flame ;  
Or God Himself leaned out of heaven to close  
The refuge of the Ark—no mortal knows.

God shut him in. The Lord God sealed his door.  
Whom God shuts in is safe for evermore.

For yet seven days did God the Lord restrain  
The vengeance of the deep and of the rain.  
There was a noise of viols in the earth,  
Eating and drinking, pomp and bridal mirth,  
And violence, and cries of captives sold,  
And worshippings of stone and wood and gold.

Through all the golden cities, the unholy ;  
Through regions of broad rivers winding slowly ;

To savage mountain-gorge and far-off strand  
Strange rumours spread, how forth of every land,  
From under every star and cloud, there came  
Innumerable creatures—wild and tame,  
Known and unnamable ; hordes, flocks, flights,  
                  swarms ;

An endless pageant of bewildering forms  
And wondrous colours ; monstrous and minute ;  
Grotesque, ferocious, lovely ; beast and brute,  
Bird, reptile, insect, mollusc ; life in fur  
And life in feather, leather, horny bur,  
And shell, and hair, and scales.

  For many days  
Their myriad-marching clouded distant ways  
With dust, and filled the land with hoarse wild  
                  sound.

Men marvelled ; but of all not one was found  
To read the portent or to heed the sign.

But lust o' the eyes and frolic born of wine  
Led forth one wanton rout to hear and see—  
Princes and captains riding royally ;  
Lewd girls with tinkling feet and jewelled ears ;  
And singing-men ; archers and men with spears ;

And in the midst one Woman, tall and white—  
Beautiful, wondrous—splendid as a light  
On some black headland, when the sea-folk make  
High beacons in the darkness for the sake  
Of their sweet goddess-maid, the Moon.

Behold !

This was that mightiest Harlot of the old  
Corrupted earth before the great Flood came.  
Enchantment fell on those who heard her name ;  
Her eyes made mad ; the breath of her desire  
Was wild as wind, inexorable as fire.  
Man knew no shame who gazed upon her face.  
She broke the giants in the fierce embrace  
Of her white limbs, laughing for amorousness.  
The young men were as grapes beneath the press ;  
She crushed their youth, and flung the skins away.

Laughing, she came with all that lewd array,  
And stared with mocking eyes upon the Ark.

Around, the ancient woods were hushed and dark.  
The Ark was closed. No cry of beast or bird  
Was heard within. No stir, no sound was heard.

Hushed were the heavens, and dark with brooding  
cloud.

The stillness smote her heart. She called aloud  
And bade them smite the Ark.

The soldier's spear  
Thundered. Then all was still.

Deep awe and fear  
Fell on the Woman's soul. They smote once more  
And beat upon the walls and sealèd door.  
But no one answered. Not a sound was heard.  
The dark heavens whist. No leaf o' the forest stirred.

The Woman felt her limbs grow heavy as stone.

She bade her people leave her there alone.  
She watched them go ; with scared dilated eyes  
She followed them beneath the lowering skies,  
And saw them riding far across the land.

She turned and struck the door with trembling  
hand,

And listened trembling. "Man within," she cried,  
"Answer ; I am alone."

No voice replied.



Then plucked she from her brows the moon, and  
tore  
Her dyed attire ; and, beating on the door,  
Shrieked : “ Answer, answer, answer ! ”

All was still.

The awful silence made her being thrill.  
She gathered dust and strewed it on her hair,  
And, striking hands together in despair,  
Shrieked : “ Speak, ere terror blabs abroad my  
shame,  
For dread hath seized on me.”

No answer came.

Then from the Woman rose a piercing cry :  
“ Hear, earth ; ye heavens, hearken ! here am I,  
The world’s great Harlot, who have snared and  
slain

The last old giants of the seed of Cain,  
And reddened all my robes with youthful blood.  
And now the Lord will chase me with His flood,  
And hunt me as a beast ; and though He spare  
The beast, will spare not me, but clutch my hair,  
And slay me without mercy for my sin !

I came to mock thee, O thou man within,  
But fear hath fallen upon me. Now I know  
That anguish and unutterable woe  
And sure destruction are at hand."

No sound  
Was heard, save bitter weeping on the ground,  
Where, sobbing with her face among the dust,  
The Harlot moaned: "The Lord is just—is just!"

Then spoke a voice, gentle, compassionate:  
"Why weepest thou?"

"Because it is too late."

"It never is too late to mourn for sin."

"Then open."

"Nay, the Lord hath shut me in."

"Must I then perish?"

"Nay, thy flesh alone  
Shall for thine evil in the flesh atone!"

There was a noise of viols in the earth :  
Eating and drinking, pomp, and bridal mirth.  
But day and night the Harlot, weeping sore,  
Crouched in the dust before the sealèd door.

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### III.—THE VOICES.

“And the waters prevailed, and were increased greatly upon the earth ; . . . and the mountains were covered. And all flesh died, . . . and every man : . . . and Noah only remained alive, and they that were with him in the ark.”

THE air was filled with sound of rain ; the ground  
With sound of water ; and amid the sound  
Were heard two awful Voices.

\* \* \*

“Look !” one cried ;

“What see'st thou ?”

And the other Voice replied :

“The smoke of tumbling waters ; rain that smites  
The waters into smoke.

                                Upon the heights  
Crowding and flight and tumult — beasts and  
men.”

\* \* \*

“What is it thou canst see? Look forth again.”

“I see a marble temple, white and fair.

The black waves lash the steps. In mad despair

The priests are flinging to the roaring sea

Their gods of gold and silver. Now they flee ;

They seek the clefts o’ the rocks. They flee, they  
seek

Refuge from rocky cleft and rugged peak.

They howl with terror.”

\* \* \*

“Look yet forth again.

What see'st thou?”

“A smoking crater ; haggard men.  
Each glares at each with red and wolfish eyes.  
They cast their lots, for still the waters rise.”

“Forbear ; no more !”

\* \* \*

“Now look. What see'st thou?”

“Lo !

A single summit, hoar with ice and snow ;  
No other land. The vast sea rolls beneath.  
A tigress, with her cub between her teeth,  
Stands on the summit panting, wild with fear.”

\* \* \*

“Yet once again. What dost thou see or hear?”

“Drifting of giant clouds ; encircling sea ;  
Great waves ; a raft of tree made fast to tree ;  
Upon the raft a man.

The man in rage  
Hath gnawed his flesh his famine to assuage.”

“What doth the man?”

“He sits with covered head.”

“Is the man weeping?”

“Lord, the man is dead.”

\* \* \*

“What see'st thou now?”

“Sky, sea ; betwixt the twain,  
The Ark.”

\* \* \*

“Doth any living thing remain?”

“Not one of all that Thou didst make of yore.”

The awful Voice responded: “Look no more!”

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IV.—THE WATERS.

“And he sent forth a dove from him to see if the waters were abated from off the face of the ground; but the dove found no rest for the sole of her foot.”

AROUND the globe one wave, from pole to pole,  
Rolled on, and found no shore to break its roll.  
One awful water mirrored everywhere  
The silent, blue, illimitable air;  
And glassed at one same hour the midnight moon,  
Sunrise, and sunset, and the sun at noon.

Beneath the noontide sun 'twas still as death.  
Within the dawn no living thing drew breath.  
Beneath the cold white moon the cold blue wave  
Sealed with an icy hush the old world's grave.

But, hark ! upon the sunset's edge were heard,  
Afar and faint, the cries of beast and bird.

Afar, between the sunset and the dark,  
The lions had awakened in the Ark.  
Across the great red splendour white wings flew,  
Weary of wandering where no green leaf grew ;  
Weary of searching for that unfound shore  
From which the Raven had returned no more.

And as the white wings laboured slowly back,  
And down the huge orb sank, a speck of black  
Stood fluttering in the circle of the sun,—  
While the long billows, passing one by one,  
Lifted and lowered in the crimson blaze  
A dead queen of the old and evil days.

One gold-clasped arm lay beautiful and bare ;  
The gold of power gleamed in her floating hair ;  
Her jewelled raiment in the glassy swell  
Glittered ; and ever as she rose and fell,  
And o'er his reddened claws the ripple broke,  
The Raven fluttered with uneasy croak.



## KOZMA THE SMITH.

## A RUSSIAN FAIRY STORY.

“The Rusálkas are female water-spirits. . . . They are generally represented under the form of beauteous maidens, with full and snow-white bosoms, and with long and slender limbs. . . . Their hair is long and thick and wavy, and green as is the grass. . . . Besides the full-grown Rusálkas there are little ones, having the appearance of seven-year-old girls. These are supposed, by the Russian peasants, to be the ghosts of still-born children, or such as have died before there was time to baptise them. . . . If any person who hears one of them lamenting will exclaim, ‘I baptise thee in the name of the Father,’ &c., the soul of that child will be saved, and will go straight to heaven. Dead children are supposed to come back in the spring to their native village under the semblance of swallows and other small birds, and to seek by soft twittering or song to console their sorrowing parents.”—See Ralston’s ‘Songs of the Russian People,’ pp. 118, 144, 213, *et passim*.

ALL the fair maidens are out in the street,  
 Singing all night till the blushing of morn,—  
 Singing a welcome, in cadences sweet,  
 Unto the spring-rain, the flax, and the corn :

For the Gold Plough has passed over valley and hill,  
With the Lord God holding the oxen in hand ;  
While St Peter beside, with his goad, whistled shrill ;  
And the Mother of Christ cast the seed o'er the  
land ;

And the marmot has crept from his winter sleep,  
And the steppe is alive with his whistling cry ;  
And the rook has sailed from across the blue deep ;  
And the lark, from a little white cloud, fills the  
sky ;

And the pike's sent his tail through the spongy ice ;  
And the swallows come flying from Paradise ;  
And the cricket's astir ; and the bear in his den  
Wakes, yawning, and feels it is spring among men.

Beautiful Spring !—sing the girls in the street—  
Sweet rain of the Spring ! dear blue of the sky !  
O rain, pour over the grandfather's wheat,  
The maiden's flax, and the grandmother's rye !  
O Spring, give the birch her silver chemise,  
Give the noble horse-chestnut his gloves of red ;  
Bring safely all little birds over the seas—  
All little winged souls of the babes that are dead !

Oh, the village is glad 'mid the rustle of wings,  
And the fragrance and murmur of growing things !

And all poor mothers with children dead  
Spread the piece of white linen with crumbs of bread  
Outside for their birds on the window-sill.  
In the dim russet morning when all is still,  
They can hear their little ones twitter and sing ;  
And they weep, and are solaced, and bless the  
    Spring !

But Kozma the Smith is weary of life,  
And heart-sick with thoughts of his dear dead wife,  
And the little girl-babe who was born and died  
On the mother's cold bosom last Whitsuntide.  
Heart-sick is Kozma the Smith, as he stands  
With a hammer and red-hot bar in his hands,  
Gazing on vacancy—thinking he heard  
His little one's cry in the cry of a bird.

And his brawny throat aches, and his eyes are red,  
As he spreads the linen and crumbles the bread  
On the ledge of the window—then lies awake  
Listening till day for his little girl's sake.

But his crumbs lie untouched : day slips after day,  
And never a little bird takes one away ;  
And never at morning, when all is still,  
Does *he* hear a chirp on the window-sill !

Then Kozma the Smith lifts his tear-blinded eyes,  
With a cry: "What to me are the green of the  
grass,  
The flowers and the birds, and the laugh of the skies,  
If the Spring has not brought me my own little  
lass?"

And Kozma the Smith casts him down with a groan:  
"Dear wife, dost thou lie in the dark ground alone?  
Is the little one stolen? . . . It lay in its place,  
Covered over with flowers to its sweet waxen face,  
When they beat down the nails of the coffin-lid.  
Have the water-sprites found where my darling was  
hid  
In the darkness, dear wife,—in the flowers, at thy  
side?"  
And he thinks in dumb pain how the little one  
died—

Unbaptised, unanointed, an outcast from grace!  
And Kozma goes forth with a haggard face,  
And the light in his eyes is unearthly and wild—  
For he knows the Rusáلكas have taken the child.

In the dead of the night, when the pines on the  
hill  
Stand asleep in the mist, and the valley is still;

When the pulses of being so peacefully beat,  
One almost can hear the grass grow in the street ;  
When the hearthstone is black, and the cricket  
    asleep,  
And the dew hangs in drops on the fleece of the  
    sheep ;  
When the great ruddy moon is just sinking, and  
    shines  
Through the white misty ridge of the topmost  
    pines,—  
In the dead of the night Kozma wakes with a start,  
And springs to the window with beating heart ;  
Flings it wide—gazes wildly at forest and sky—  
And hears—oh, listen !—his little one's cry.

Through the forest the great setting moon smoul-  
    ders red,  
And the pine-branches lean dusky crimson o'erhead ;  
The cold stars glimmer through,—and a long leafy  
    sigh  
Runs before him as Kozma the Smith hurries by.  
On the boughs hang the thread and the fluttering  
    rags  
    Which the villagers leave for the water-sprite.  
With his wild gleaming eyes and blown hair Kozma  
    speeds,

Till he hears the weird sough of the water-flags,  
And sees the marsh-mist trailing ghostly and  
white,

And catches among the black pools in the reeds  
The glint of a marsh-lamp, the light of a star.

Then he pauses and listens. The wind murmurs by;  
The water-flags moan; and how faint and how  
far—

Oh, hearken once more!—comes the little one's cry!

The spongy marsh-mosses spirt up from his tread;  
The moon has gone down in the mist, round and red;  
The great stars dilate, and the blue sky grows dark,  
And the weird whispering swamp glooms before  
him—when, hark!

From the black reedy water a bird, out of sight,  
Sends a bright silvery tinkle of song through the  
night;

And for leagues o'er the marshes, beneath the dark  
sky,

From each bulrush a bird trills a silvery reply.

Then the dusk air is fluttered with flurries of wings,  
And jangles of music; and now—oh, behold!—  
The morass is on fire with strange stars, floating  
rings,

Flaming ribbons of sapphire and scarlet and gold;

And the water-flag trembles with blossoms of fire ;  
And the bulrush is tufted with clusters of pearls ;  
And the bird-charm is changed to a fairy choir—  
To prattle of children and laughter of girls ;  
And Kozma the Smith breathes the Holy Name,  
As he sees in the circles of flowers and flame  
The glittering limbs and the green waving curls,  
The blue eyes and white breasts, of the water-girls.  
They are combing their hair with a jewelled comb,  
They are plucking the brightest lilies in blow,  
They are splashing each other with shiny foam,  
They are tossing the water-babes to and fro ;  
They are laughing and singing and drifting by—  
When he hears through their frolic the little one's  
cry.

Then Kozma the Smith, in a voice hoarse and  
wild—

“In the name of the Holy One, give me the  
child !”

Lo ! a great silence follows that cry of despair.

The revel is hushed ! Not a living thing  
Draws a breath in the stillness ; but Kozma's aware  
That a garland of rosebuds, a tremulous ring  
Of blossomy splendour, is woven and blown  
O'er the lit glassy marsh by the water-girls.

And there, with the roses about her strown,

With her tiny head pillowed on emerald curls,  
Floats the sweet girl-babe who was born and died  
On his wife's cold bosom last Whitsuntide.

Oh, spring through the water-flags, clasp and redeem  
Thy little one, Smith, if this be not a dream!

He has sprung: she is saved! With a low laugh-  
ing moan,

“My darling!” he sobs—draws her face to his  
own—

When round him rings laughter, derisive and harsh,  
And then,—in a flash,—all is black on the marsh!

---

“Hilliho, hilliho!”—How the clear echoes go  
Through the pine-woods, and bring back the shout,  
“Hilliho!”

'Tis the hunter halloos, and he clutches his gun  
Where the swamp's eerie waters have shrunk in the  
sun.

“Ho, comrades! be speedy, and come to me  
here!”—

What is it he sees that a hunter should fear?



The water-flags flutter their ribbons of green  
Round the black peaty marge where the waters  
have been.

What is it that lies in the flags—on its face—  
And rivets the hunter's fixed gaze to the place?

“God be thanked, you have come, friends!—The  
man!—he is dead!”

The water-flags flutter. With slow fearful tread  
They trample the reeds where the dark horror  
lies—

Touch the corpse—and then turn the dead face to  
the skies.

“God have mercy! 'tis Kozma the Smith! He  
was missed  
In the Spring.—How he clutches those weeds in  
his fist!”

## JOHN CALVIN'S DREAM.

THE books had been closed and the Judgment  
was done ;

The stars had fallen, and black was the sun ;

*The Lord is a just and terrible God !*

And heaven and earth had been swept away  
In the blood-red storm of the Judgment-day ;

*The Lord is a just and terrible God !*

And behold ! in the heaven and earth made new  
The Tree of Life by the water grew ;

*The Lord is a just and terrible God !*

And under its branches was sorrow unknown ;  
And all the Angels stood round the Throne ;

*The Lord is a just and terrible God !*

And clothed in white raiment a countless throng  
Waved shining palms and sang a new song ;

*The Lord is a just and terrible God !*

And shawm and timbrel and psaltery and fife  
Shook the golden boughs of the Tree of Life ;

*The Lord is a just and terrible God !*

And lo !—though heaven and earth were glad—  
The great human heart of Christ was sad ;

*The Lord is a just and terrible God !*

And He looked at the Blest : “ Of all that were  
dear—

Of all that I died for—how few are here ! ”

*The Lord is a just and terrible God !*

And in the glad silence, 'twixt psalm and psalm,  
Vague murmurs He heard in the heavenly calm ;

*The Lord is a just and terrible God !*

And faint far echoes of wailing came  
From the outer dark and the deathless flame ;

*The Lord is a just and terrible God !*

Save Christ's human heart, there was none that  
heard

The faint cry of anguish, the bitter word ;  
*The Lord is a just and terrible God !*

But ever some voice between psalm and psalm  
Sent a throb of pain through the blissful calm :  
*The Lord is a just and terrible God !*

“ It was not for *us* that He died,” one said ;  
“ Or ever He came *we* were doomed and  
dead ! ”  
*The Lord is a just and terrible God !*

“ He died such long ages before,” one cried,  
“ Men knew not for certain that *ever* He died ! ”  
*The Lord is a just and terrible God !*

“ He died for us—truly. I saw it ! ” one said ;  
“ But only God knew that a God was dead ! ”  
*The Lord is a just and terrible God !*

“ Yea, truly, a God !—not a man to know  
Man in his weakness, man in his woe ! ”  
*The Lord is a just and terrible God !*

“Lord Christ, I would pity and spare *Thee*,” one  
said,

“Wert Thou, the Lord, man, and I Lord in Thy  
stead !”

*The Lord is a just and terrible God !*

“Remember *me*, Christ, for I stood at Thy  
knee

When the children were suffered to come unto  
Thee !”

*The Lord is a just and terrible God !*

“He forgets how we played,” said a low sobbing  
breath,

“In the street by the fountain at Nazareth !”

*The Lord is a just and terrible God !*

And Christ's heart ached ; He felt the tears  
rise

And darken out heaven from His human eyes ;

*The Lord is a just and terrible God !*

But ever the shawm and timbrel and fife

Shook the golden boughs of the Tree of Life ;

*The Lord is a just and terrible God !*

And He said, "Do the men made perfect  
hear

No sounds of the Lost who were once so  
dear?"

*The Lord is a just and terrible God!*

And the Thousands Signed: "We hear no word;  
For these which are dead praise not the Lord."

*The Lord is a just and terrible God!*

Then the Lord Himself said, "Son, let be;  
Even as it falleth, so lieth the tree."

*The Lord is a just and terrible God!*

But Christ said, "Once yet again will I die  
For these which in utter anguish lie!"

*The Lord is a just and terrible God!*

"It may not be, Son," the Lord God said,  
"For sin is cast out and death is dead."

*The Lord is a just and terrible God!*

Christ rose: "If I cannot die again,  
I will go to my Lost in their endless pain!"

*The Lord is a just and terrible God!*

And an awful shuddering silence fell  
As Christ went forth to the gates of hell.

*The Lord is a just and terrible God!*

• • • • •  
And with a cry of terror Calvin woke,  
Spread aguish hands, and raised to heaven a face  
Haggard and wet with agony of soul.  
“Pity me, God!” he moaned; “nor judge the sin  
Corrupted nature blindly sins in sleep!  
Deal clemently, nor visit with Thy wrath,  
O Lord, Thou God most terrible and just,  
The raving blasphemy of evil dreams!”

## TWO LIVES.

A MONG the lonely hills they played ;  
No other bairns they ever knew ;  
A little lad, a little maid,  
In sweet companionship they grew.

They played among the ferns and rocks  
A childish comedy of life—  
Kept house and milked the crimson docks,  
And called each other man and wife.

They went to school ; they used to go  
With arms about each other laid ;  
Their flaxen heads, in rain or snow,  
Were sheltered by a single plaid.

And so—and so it came to pass  
They loved each other ere they knew ;  
His heart was like a blade o' grass,  
And hers was like its drap o' dew.



The years went by ; the changeful years  
    Brought larger life and toil for life ;  
They parted in the dusk with tears—  
    They called each other man and wife.

They married—she another man,  
    And he in time another maid ;  
The story ends as it began ;—  
    Among the lonely hills—they *played!*



## WAYSIDE VIGNETTES.

## FLOWER FANCIES.

ERE blossom time had yet begun,  
 When grass scarce hid the brown earth's  
                   leanness,

And fagot hedgerows in the sun  
       Were slowly kindling into greenness,

I met a maiden, small and fair,  
       Along the cheerless highway bringing  
 Such flowery boughs as mortal ne'er  
       Hath seen from earthly tree-trunk springing.

Too eager to await the pledge  
       Of skies so fickle, trees so lazy,  
 She had broken thorn-sticks from the hedge,  
       And tipped each prickle with a daisy.

Oh, little maid, whose pretty skill  
Turns March to May so well and quickly,  
Teach me thy craft!—*my* wayward will  
Hath made life's very daisies prickly.

---

BEYOND.

A DARKENING sky is at my back ;  
Gaunt woods my westward path oppose,  
But every bough is freaked in black  
Against a heaven of gold and rose.

'Tis leafless March, and bitter cold ;  
But these stark branches, furred with ice,  
Blend in that glow of rose and gold  
Like blossomy bowers of Paradise.

Oh, Life, when all thy bloom and shade  
Are stripped, and age-chilled hearts despond,  
How beautiful thou mayst be made  
By one bright glimpse of heaven beyond !

## THE CROW.

WITH rakish eye and plenished crop,  
Oblivious of the farmer's gun,  
Upon the naked ash-tree top  
The Crow sits basking in the sun.

An old ungodly rogue, I wot !  
For, perched in black against the blue,  
His feathers, torn with beak and shot,  
Let woful glints of April through.

The year's new grass, and, golden-eyed,  
The daisies sparkle underneath,  
And chestnut-trees on either side  
Have opened every ruddy sheath.

But doubtful still of frost and snow,  
The ash alone stands stark and bare,  
And on its topmost twig the Crow  
Takes the glad morning's sun and air.

A DESERTED GARDEN.

A HIGHROAD white with the dust of May ;  
An old red wall, and an iron gate ;  
A scent of Spring-time : a blossomy spray,  
Thrown over and bowed by the blossom's weight.

An empty house, and a garden-ground  
That no one tended ! The flowering trees  
Had grown half wild. With a revel of sound  
The birds in flocks made merry at ease.

The gravelled pathways were blurred with green ;  
The flower-beds each into other had run ;  
'Twas all one ferment of colour and sheen,  
And scent and song, in the glittering sun.

And yet the place had a rueful look  
For lack of laughter and pattering feet ;  
The fruit-tree shadowed no maiden's book ;  
No greybeard dozed on the garden-seat.

Methought I saw, as I gazed within,  
An idyl of youth with its bliss and pain—  
The empty house of "what might have been"—  
The garden of dreams that were dreamed in vain.

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## A BIRD'S FLIGHT.

FROM some bright cloudlet dropping ;  
From branch to blossom hopping ;  
Then drinking from a small brown stone  
That stood alone  
Amid the brook ; then, singing,  
Upspringing,  
It soared : my bird had flown.

A glimpse of beauty only  
That left the glen more lonely ?  
Nay, truly ; for its song and flight  
Made earth more bright !  
If men were less regretful  
And fretful,  
Would life yield less delight ?

## THE WEIR.

WHERE mossy boulders make a weir,  
The brook's brown water is so clear  
One sees each small brown stone within  
Distinctly, when the sun is in.

But when the sun's out, 'tis a glass  
Filled full of leaves and boughs, with grass  
At edge, and here and there a bit  
Of cloud or sky deep down in it.  
Deep down the blue sky seems to be ;  
The poor brown stones you cannot see.

When little puffs of coolness make  
The water warp, the foliage shake,  
A thousand trees seem dancing up  
From darkness in the crystal cup.

With soul for water, sense for weir,  
Man sees his mortal image here.  
He counts each poor brown stone within  
Distinctly, when his sun is in.  
With Heaven to help, he feels no less  
Unfathomed depths of loveliness.

## JANUARY AND JUNE.

WHEN snowy eaves are jagged with spar,  
And every brook to crystal turns,  
The frost that cracks the water-jar  
Fills window-panes with flowers and ferns.

When flocks upon the hills are lost,  
And snow-wreaths block the carrier's wain,  
With silvery flowers and ferns the frost  
Fills every misted window-pane.

When cold has stopped the cricket's tune,  
And ice-bound clocks forget the hours,  
The frost, as though it dreamed of June,  
Fills all the panes with ferns and flowers.

When June returns with flowers and ferns  
It also dreams,—for rocks are mossed  
With furry rime, and, as it turns,  
Each willow-leaf seems hoar with frost.

But agrimony in the hedge  
Most wintrily recalls the time  
When urchins climbed the window-ledge  
To thaw the flowers and ferns of rime.



## COCKCROW.'

WHEN nights are short in early June,  
We, risen betimes, shall haply see  
The silver sickle of the moon  
Hang gleaming in an eastern tree.

Poised in the dawn's pure silver-grey,  
Blue clouds shall wait the gold and red,  
While pallid star-flakes melt away  
In cold, clear azure overhead.

The dim brown fields shall seem to sleep  
Self-shadowed ; mist shall here and there  
Lie white in pools, where dewlap-deep  
Great kine shall loom i' the twilight air.

Where trees in hazy blue embower  
Some distant farm, a sudden cock  
Shall crow ; and faint from city tower  
Shall float the chimes of three o'clock.

Then from the meadow, sweet and loud,  
The morning star of song shall spire,  
And morn shall burst through sky and cloud  
In one vast flowerage of fire.

Oh, revelling skylark, sing and soar,  
Rose-winged, rose-bosomed, o'er the morn !  
But chanticleer and we, once more  
Must scratch the world for gems and corn.

---

## FAIRY HEAVENS.

HAVE you seen the forest-pool  
In the summer? Clear and cool,  
Glassing, 'mid the trees it lies,  
Silvery clouds and sapphire skies.

When in windless August days  
Not a ripple o'er it plays,  
One can almost think he sees  
Through to the Antipodes.

Mirrored reeds must scarcely know  
Whether up or down they grow ;  
And the trees doubt whether they're  
Crystal-washed or parched in air.

Brindled Crummie on the brink  
Pauses as she stoops to drink ;  
When she drinks, she drinks for two—  
'Tis a wondrous thing to do !

Swallows, flashing to and fro,  
Strike the water as they go—  
Hawking insects? Not a fly ;  
Only puzzled with that sky.

East and west, and north and south,  
Have they flown from dearth and drouth ;  
'Twould, indeed, be sweet and strange  
Through those nether heavens to range !

Puff !—a sudden whiff of air  
Stars the mirror everywhere.  
Myriad ripples, gemmed and curled,  
Have annulled a fairy world.

Any clown in summer may  
View these marvels day by day ;  
Day by day we pass them by  
With an undelighted eye.

Were they seen but once an age,  
Princes would make pilgrimage  
To the happy hallowed ground  
Where these double heavens were found !

---

## PINE AND PALM.

“Ein fichtenbaum steht einsam.”—HEINE.

A LONELY tree, the rowan grew  
Among the boulders ; long and lone,  
The wild moor heaved beneath the blue  
In heathery swells of turf and stone.

They'd wandered east, they'd wandered west,  
With dance and music, song and mirth,  
That sunburned group who paused to rest  
On that one spot of shadowy earth.

With heat and travel overcome,  
The bandsman slumbered. On the grass  
Lay leathern pipes and cymballed drum,  
And bright peaked hat with bells of brass.

With low soft laughs and whispered fun,  
Blithe eyes and lips of loving red,  
Two girls sat stringing in the sun  
The rowan-berries on a thread.

Against a boulder mossy-grown  
I saw the singing-woman lean  
Her dark proud head. Upon the stone  
She had placed her gilded tambourine.

Though not asleep, she did but seem  
Half conscious, for the hot sun kissed  
Her cheek, and wrapped her heart in dream,  
Like some glad garden wrapped in mist.

Into the tambourine I dropped  
My modest tribute unto art;  
The children, threading berries, stopped;  
The woman wakened with a start.

She rose and thanked me, bright and free,  
Then added: "God is good to-day!  
One hour I am in Napoli——  
And this is Scotland—far away!"

And I remembered, as I turned,  
How, lone in Norland snows, the pine  
Dreamed of that lonely palm which yearned  
On burning crags beneath the line.

---

## DAY-DREAMS.

BROAD August burns in milky skies,  
The world is blanched with hazy heat ;  
The vast green pasture, even, lies  
Too hot and bright for eyes and feet.

Amid the grassy levels rears  
The sycamore against the sun  
The dark boughs of a hundred years,  
The emerald foliage of one.

Lulled in a dream of shade and sheen,  
Within the clement twilight thrown  
By that great cloud of floating green,  
A horse is standing, still as stone.

He stirs nor head nor hoof, although  
The grass is fresh beneath the branch ;  
His tail alone swings to and fro  
In graceful curves from haunch to haunch.

He stands quite lost, indifferent  
To rack or pasture, trace or rein ;  
He feels the vaguely sweet content  
Of perfect sloth in limb and brain.

---

THE BROOK.

OF the Brook the Hazels said,  
As they whispered on the brink :  
“ Was there ever, do you think,  
Such a bright and nut-brown maid ? ”

Said the Brook : “ No shadow grows  
On the moorlands whence I came ;  
All the sky's one sapphire flame,  
So I'm sunburnt, I suppose ! ”

## LOVE AND LABOUR.

AT noon he seeks a grassy place  
    Beneath the hedgerow from the heat ;  
His wife sits by, with happy face,  
    And makes his homely dinner sweet.

Upon her lap their baby lies,  
    Rosy and plump and stout of limb—  
With two great blue unwinking eyes  
    Of stolid wonder watching him.

The trees are swooning in the heat ;  
    No bird has heart for song or flight ;  
The fiery poppy in the wheat  
    Droops, and the blue sky aches with light.

He empties dish, he empties can ;  
    He coaxes baby till she crows ;  
Then rising up a strengthened man,  
    He blithely back to labour goes.

His hammer clinks through glare and heat—  
    With little thought and well content  
He toils and splits for rustic feet  
    Fragments of some old continent.



Homeward he plods, his travail o'er,  
Through sunset lanes, past fragrant farms,  
Till—glimpse of heaven!—his cottage-door  
Frames baby in her mother's arms.

---

## WOODLAND WINDOWS.

WHERE tall green elm-trees in a row  
Their boughs in Gothic arches pleach,  
Two foliage-fretted lancets show  
A warm blue sea, a summer beach.

One lancet holds a sunset sky,  
And, where the glassy ripple rolls,  
An old man hanging nets to dry  
In brown loops from the trestled poles.

And one, a patch with wild flowers gay,  
A shoal where green sea-ribbons float,  
And two bright sunburnt tots at play  
Beside an upturned fishing-boat.

Within the woodland's pillared shade,  
I seem from some dim aisle to see  
That shore by whose blue waters played  
The little lads of Zebedee.

---

A RUSSIAN GUN.

THREE lime-trees, full of drowsy sound  
And dreamy shadow edged with sun ;  
Amid the trees a grassy mound ;  
Upon the mound a Russian gun.

And on the black and massy ring  
Which bound the cannon's murderous throat  
A little bird had folded wing,  
And shook out crystal note on note.

The ripe corn shimmered in the heat  
About the little red-roofed town ;  
And in the silence, clear and sweet,  
That one glad voice trilled up and down

In artless rapture. As I stood,  
I thought of all the waste of life,  
The squandered gold, the tears of blood,  
The crime of that Crimean strife.

The blithe notes seemed to mock mankind !  
Had nations made the planet ring,  
That some small English bird might find  
A perch whereon to sit and sing ?

---

UNDER TWO TREES.

UPON the deep green moss I lie,  
And watch the beech against the sky.

The sunny boughs are letting through  
A million little gleams of blue.

The Tree of Life could never be  
More full of heaven than this tree ;

For each green leaf within my view  
Seems matched with one of shining blue.

I lie and think—for who can know  
What on the other side may grow?—

What if these gleams of blue were each  
The leaves of some blue heavenly beech,

Whose azure top had come to be  
Blent with the green top of our tree,

And whose immortal boughs of blue  
Let gleams of earthly emerald through ;

And oh ! if underneath *that* tree  
Lay some one dead, who thought of me !

---

ON THE SHORE.

NOT lonely though alone, she played  
Between the sea and land ;  
With shells and meadow-flowers she made  
A garden in the sand.

In silvery visions from the sea  
The summer clouds were blown ;  
Sweet voices came from field and tree,  
Soft sounds from wave and stone.

She heeded not ; she lived apart ;  
Absorbed in joy she played.  
Between two worlds her little heart  
A little world had made.

Ah ! we too on the shore, dear child,  
Are dreamers all, like thee !  
By figments of the heart beguiled,  
We cannot hear or see.

Soft voices call from sea and land,  
But neither world is ours ;  
Our lives are spent on barren sand  
And plots of rootless flowers.

## TWILIGHT MEMORIES.

I HEARD at twilight on the bridge  
The plover's melancholy cry ;  
The moorland reared a sullen ridge  
Against the amber evening sky.

No farm-light cheered the deepening grey  
Of those vast sweeps of heath and stone ;  
The sky seemed far—so far away ;  
My heart felt utterly alone.

And as when summer rain is done  
A shower is shaken by a gust  
From some sad tree, although the sun  
Has long since dried the ground to dust,

Even so within my mournful mind  
I felt my manhood's greener years  
Shaken by fitful gusts of wind,  
Which filled my eyes with ancient tears.

And whilst in pleasant pain I wooed  
Old dreams, lost hopes, vain yearnings back,  
Two figures on the sky-line stood,  
Clear cut from head to foot in black.

Cut clear against the amber glow,  
They stood together hand in hand—  
A man and woman—did they know  
How near to heaven they seemed to stand?

That dark ridge seemed the world's end ; they  
The last of lovers. Side by side  
They gazed ;—what radiant prospect lay  
Beyond them, unto me denied ?

He draws her close ; her arms are twined  
About his neck !—Oh, happy years,  
Now shaken by this woful wind  
Which fills my eyes with ancient tears !

---

BY MOONLIGHT.

A FOOT at midnight. All the way  
Is warm and sweet with scents of May.

The cocks are crowing hours too soon,  
 The dogs are barking far and near,  
 The frogs are croaking round the mere ;  
 And in a tree the naked Moon  
 Is crouching down, as though she would  
 Her silvery-bosomed maidenhood  
 Conceal among the leaves, too thin  
 And small to hide her beauty in.

Dear Moon, 'tis I, thy friend—who pray  
 Thy company upon my way.

---

IN THE SHADOW.

NIGHT is the shadow of the Earth, but we  
 Lose the fine sense through use, nor thank nor  
 praise.  
 In the hot summer's blue and windless days  
 Sweet is the grass and dear the shadowing tree,  
 Whence, stretched at ease, we watch with languid  
 look  
 Birds, insects, flowers, the cloud, the nut-brown  
 brook.



But all the year and feverish day by day  
Earth shadows us ; the burden and the heat  
Are lifted from us ; sweet is night, and sweet  
The stars and silvery clouds, and Milky Way.  
Use teaches thankfulness a sinful thrift ;  
We prize the casual, slight the constant gift.

---

## IN THE FALL.

AMONG the bleak, wet woods I tread  
On leaves of yellow and of red ;  
The leaves are whirled in wind and rain,  
The woods are filled with sounds of pain ;  
No bird is left to sing.

Man's destiny is blowing wind,  
A little leaf is all mankind ;  
The wind blows high, the wind blows low,  
The leaflet flutters to and fro,  
And dreams it is a wing.

Amid the blowing of the wind,  
Amid the drifting of mankind,  
Among the melancholy rain,  
And woodlands filled with sounds of pain,  
No heart is left to sing.

## KARMA.

**I**N the heart of the white summer mist lay a  
 green little piece of the world ;  
 And the tops of the beeches were lost in the mist,  
 and the mist ringed us round ;  
 All the low leaves were silvered with dew, and  
 the herbage with dew was impearled ;  
 And the turmoil of life was but vaguely divined  
 through the mist as a sound.

In the heart of the mist there was warmth—for  
 the soil full of sun was aglow  
 Like a fruit when it colours—and fragrance from  
 flowers and a scent from the soil ;  
 And a lamb in the grass, in the flowers, in the dew,  
 nibbled—whiter than snow ;  
 And the white summer mist was a fold for us both  
 against sorrow and toil.

From the fields in the mist came a bleating, a  
    sound as of longing and need ;  
But the lamb from the grass in its little green  
    heaven never lifted its head ;  
It was innocent, whiter than snow ; it was glad in  
    the flowers, took no heed ;  
But the sound from the fields in the mist made me  
    grieve as for one that is dead.

And behold ! 'twas a dream I had dreamed, and a  
    voice made me wake with a start ;  
Saying : " Hark ! once again in the flesh shall ye  
    twain live your life for a span,  
But since whiteness of snow is as nought in mine  
    eyes without pity of heart,  
Lo ! the lamb shall be born as a wolf, with a  
    wolf's heart, but thou as a man ! "

## COMFORT ON PELION.

FROM white Iolcos by the sunny sea  
 The Thrall went forth at noon—an aged  
 man,

Unkempt and wretched, clad in tattered skins,  
 With clouted leggings bound about his knees,  
 And in his palsied hand an oaken staff.

Beyond the vineyards and the olive-groves,  
 The flowery slopes and fruitful grassy lawns ;  
 Above the shadowy planes, where bright of leaf  
 And red of fruit the ripe pomegranate bursts ;  
 Above the chestnuts of the lower glens,—  
 Yea, high above the oaks and windy pines,  
 The snowy top of Pelion in the sun  
 Glittered ; but there was ever genial shade  
 Within the hollow ivy-fringèd rock  
 Where dwelt the strong, glad-hearted friend of men,  
 The Centaur.

Leaning on his staff,  
The aged Thrall, pricked on by feverish haste,  
Climbed upward from the valley ; paused to rest,  
Despite his haste—for haste is scant of breath—  
On many a root embowered in bosky bloom,  
On many an ancient boulder ; paused to drink  
By many a brook deep-edged with coloured moss,  
And fringed with stout green rushes ; but in rest  
Or motion, still he kept his eager eyes  
Fixed on the glittering peak, and still one thought  
Shook all his toil-worn limbs with hope and  
fear—

The thought of what immense and awful shape  
Ruled and had ruled through storied centuries  
These many-fountained glens and forest-slopes.

And as the Thrall fared on, from rock and tree  
The little birds sang sweetly. On the tree  
The burnt cicadas chattered ; on the rock  
The lizard basked ; and everywhere the soil  
Laughed out in dimpling depths of grass and  
flowers

Of red, blue, gold ; and all the mountain droned  
With falling waters and with pebbly streams.

And now, among the huge red-shafted pines,  
The last green wall of Chiron's realm, the Thrall  
Heard suddenly a strain of mighty song,  
The resonant vibrations of a lyre  
Divine, colossal—heard an awful voice  
Which swayed the pine-wood like an April wind,  
An infinite tender gale of joyous power ;  
And all the pine-wood sang ; and all the air  
Was filled with piny fragrance ; and there came  
A muffled sound of sighing and of song  
Ascending, as the slopes and leafy glens  
One after other felt their sleepy boughs  
Swung in the ever-widening rings of sound.

The aged Thrall felt all the aches of toil,  
Rain, frost—the feebleness and cramps of age—  
Beguiled from his limbs. A fiery blood,  
The primrose sap of youth, through all his veins  
Ran tingling to the nails, the grizzled scalp ;  
Kindled wild light within the bleared eyes ;  
Burst into flower—the primrose sap of youth !—  
Burst into merry blossom in his brain.  
He stood erect ; he flung away his staff,  
Clapped horny hands, and, dancing to the song,  
Leaped from concealment of the swaying pines !

Magnificent in his immortal age,  
Th' enormous might of Chiron sang i' the sun.  
The frost of centuries had blanched his head  
And hair, which hung in hoary foliage  
Below his shoulder-blades. A shaggy growth,  
A frosty herbage, covered back and flank,  
Each huge and strenuously corded arm,  
The massy shelving muscles of the chest ;  
While thickly grown on lip and cheek and chin,  
His beard seemed pendulous mosses white with  
rime.

From the strong withers and the mighty croup  
Down to the bushy fringes of the hoofs,  
Age had but dashed with grey the rugged brown—  
For on the mountain and the mountaineer  
Alike the wintry white begins atop.

Sovereignty, wisdom, joyousness of life  
Shone in the depths of those immortal eyes,  
Whose clear blue light, like morning on the hills,  
Softened to human kindness a face  
Rocky, and worn with centuries like a rock,  
And lit with colour as a rock with flowers,  
And fixed as rock to endure unflinchingly  
Pain and the stormy buffets of the world.



Abashed at sight of such wild grandeur, dazed,  
The Thrall, with loosened knees and suppliant  
    hands,  
Drew near the mighty-throated Singer. He  
Ceased, and with outspread hand against the  
    strings  
Silenced the ringing instrument. The Thrall  
Thus spoke with stammering tongue and fright-  
    ened eyes :

“O Healer and Helper—Chiron!—if indeed  
Some god unknown thou be not, having here  
Thine ever-happy seat i' the shining blue  
On topmost Pelion.”

    Answering with a laugh,  
“Well hast thou named my name,” the Centaur  
    said ;

“Even Chiron, and no whit a god am I.  
But thou, old father, rise, and tremble not—  
Unless, indeed, this high pellucid air  
Strike chilly through thy goatskin ; so shalt thou  
Have pine-knots quickly blazing by the cave  
To warm thy wintry years withal. But say—  
For thou art weak and old—from what fair thorpe,  
In what keen quest, have these thy faltering feet

Borne thee so far afield? The aged man  
 Loves less this blue roof than his smoke-browned  
     beams,  
 And mostly haunts 'the home-fields, whence he  
     hears  
 The distant kine and far-faint neat-herd's pipe."

The Thrall replied: "I speak to gracious ears.  
 A thrall, an aged man and miserable,  
 I seek thy succour. In the peaceful vale,  
 My home, by rich Iolcos and the sea,  
 The common rumour names thee friend of men;  
 Compassionate reputes thee; wise to heal,  
 By virtue of herbs and flowers, all human ills—  
 Wherefore I come to supplicate thine aid."

"Tell me thine ailment, so perchance my skill  
 May give relief."

    "Alas! what can there be  
 Of ailments worse than these, and these are mine—  
 Sickness of life with yet desire to live,  
 Old age with memory of the bloom of youth,  
 Thralldom with thirst for freedom,—and dreams,  
     dreams, dreams  
 Of high achievement, dreams no will of mine

Avails, or hath availed, or can avail  
To change to action?"

“Not on Pelion grows  
The herb or flower to heal such ills as these.  
Life to the oldest is the oldest friend,  
The one most hard to part with. Nought can  
cure  
This ancient malady of growing old!  
Still age, though evil, is not all unblessed;  
And thou, old man, whose life has been so  
long——”

“So long!—nay, brief as is the space one takes  
To stoop and drink in. Lo! a laughing lad,  
I knelt beside a pool, and as my face  
Leaned down and touched the image of my face,  
My bright hair withering fell, my rosy cheeks  
Grew gaunt and haggard; in my sparkling eyes  
The light was quenched, and on my palsied limbs  
My goatskin rotted into rags. I rose  
And wiped my lips, a frail and aged man.  
I speak not wildly, for in truth to-day,  
When I had crossed Anauros' stream, I reached  
A grove of shadowy planes, and in the midst  
A solitary rock, and near the rock

Clear water checked by pebbles to a pool—  
A fountain sweet to thirst. I knelt to drink,  
And as I leaned I knew the shadowy place,  
The rock, the water. Sixty years ago,  
A lad, I drank there ; sixty years had sped  
Like lightning, and I knelt there gaunt and old.”

“ Age, and the disillusionment of age,  
Are ills past cure or comfort. What remains?  
A thrall, thou wouldst be free. Why, here is gold  
Shall buy thee freedom from the frost, the heat,  
The daily travail. Thou mayst lie i’ the sun,  
And chide the power that hath mismade the world ;  
Or drowse beside the fagots when the wind,  
An icy mouth, fills all the ways with snow ;  
Nay, mayst thyself have service at thy beck—  
Brown, blithe-eyed dimpled girls to lay thy board  
With meat and wine, and spread thy pleasant  
couch.”

The Centaur laughed ; but answering with a sigh,  
The Thrall ; “ O god-like Chiron, keep thy gold ;  
I seek nor brimming trough nor slothful stall.  
Freedom were valueless without the boons  
Of youthful vigour, joy of being, power

To act the dreams have made my life a dream—  
From which I wake with empty palsied hands.  
Oh, wherefore was I born a rustic child,  
Mere clod o' the common furrow? O ye paths  
And emerald shadows of the summer woods,  
Was there no dryad with a maiden's heart  
To love my father? Wherefore, O ye streams,  
That steal through tall green reeds and lonely  
fields,

Did no bright river-god in ambush lie  
What time my mother, singing as she went,  
Tripped to you with her pitcher? All unsunned  
The leprous lichen quickens in the cave ;  
Between the brown earth and the shining blue  
The golden flower is fondled into life.

Even so the embrace of mortal and divine  
Begets the flower of Heroes. Common men,  
A squalid growth i' the sunless caves of life,  
The high gods love not. And of these, indeed,  
No god hath ever need ; but oftentimes  
The Heroes are th' outstretchèd hands o' the gods  
When, leaning forth of heaven, they set their  
strength

Towards some great purpose.

All my boyish heart

Burned for heroic quest, heroic strife,  
The gladness and the bloody sweat, the death  
And deathless name of Heroes. In the grass  
I lay with upward gaze, and pained my heart  
With vague desire. Th' inexorable heaven  
Turned over like a monstrous azure wheel,  
And crushed the worm who dared to vex the gods.  
I haunted dewy copse and vine-wreathed cave,  
Lay hid by glassy fountain, watched the creeks  
Where the blue ocean, changed to emerald sea,  
Arrives with rippling laugh—arrives—arrives—  
But never lands, and tires the hope it raised  
Of some one coming who will never come.  
And no one came. I heard no satyr laugh ;  
Pan never slept within my vine-wreathed cave ;  
No wood-nymphs, bathing in the slumbrous noon,  
Pelted and played with silvery flowers of spray !  
But thirst and hunger, ache of weary limbs,  
Ague and fever, winter's icy tooth,  
The dog-star's rage—these came without a prayer !  
A common clod, with less of joy in life  
Than any grasshopper upon the clod,  
I have piped with querulous cries my summer  
through,  
Till, shrivelled to a grasshopper with age,

I feel the first hoar-frosts of wintry death.  
I thought of thee abiding on the heights,  
Immortal through the azure centuries ;  
I knew thee wise, compassionate to men ;  
I said—perchance the Cloud-born, who can clasp  
A man's hand with a hand the like of man's,  
May own a heart akin to human hearts,  
And share my sorrows if he cannot heal."

Immersed in thought the Centaur stood, and  
smoothed

The cloudy tangles of his beard with slow  
Unconscious stroke. Then turning to the Thrall,  
"Old father, sit," he said, "and rest thine age ;"  
Next, bearing from the spar-lit cavern old  
A platter and a massive golden horn  
Carved round with golden ivy and ivy-flower,  
He bade him eat and drink—"And while I speak,  
Cheer thou thy troubles with the kindly wine,  
Hearing of Heroes and of common men—  
For many a Hero as a little child  
Hath braced his tender sinews in the hug  
Of these grim arms ; and many a silent night,  
When all the woods were black, and black the plain  
With sleep, and light gleamed forth from fold nor  
farm,

Alone beneath this snowy peak I've lain,  
Ringed with the starry hollow of the night,  
And thought abysmal thoughts of life and time,  
Of sleeping little men and thronèd gods ;  
And not alone of these, though most of these,  
But of the many-visaged conscious life  
In fur and feather, jelly, horn, and stone ;  
And yet of that ubiquitous dumb strain  
In lichen, tree, and flower towards consciousness ;  
And yet again of that which hath no life—  
The golden light, the beautiful clear air,  
The rocky ribs and soft brown flesh o' the earth,  
The four great winds and laughing babes of breeze ;  
The ice, the frost, and silvery flowers of frost,  
The rain-drop, feather of snow, and rosy cloud—  
And one with these, yet so unlike to these,  
The thunderstorm, the wintry wastes and peaks,  
Th' innumerable waters of the world ;  
And even yet again—till brain grew faint—  
Of that mysterious lapse of all that is  
To that which is not—called of mortals Death.  
Two and inscrutable, throughout all time,  
Have been and are Time's riddles—Life and Death.  
Nothing more strange than Life—but Death ; than  
Death—but Life.”



With dreamy eyes the Centaur, as he spoke,  
Laid hand upon his mighty lyre,—then sang :

*Grasp my hand !*

*Hold me fast !*

*For I stagger and reel*

*At the tumult and splendour of life rushing  
past*

*In a whirlwind of fire, dust, vapour, and thunder ;  
For above me and under,*

*Upon this side and that, all the sea and the land,  
All the skies, and the gods' starry seats in the skies,  
Spin and spin on the axle of time like a wheel !*

*Through the years, through the æons,*

*With laughter and cries,*

*With clangour of conflict and singing of pæans,  
The great wheel goes spinning.*

*I see half the round, and I search the dim distance  
To find the beginning—*

*The point where the vague subtle thought, non-  
existence,*

*Is changed to the forms and the colours of  
being.*

*The great wheel goes spinning,*

*And baffles the brain  
 As it sweeps without pause through the awful,  
     inane,  
     Inscrutable tracts of the vast uncreated,  
 Then bursts into sight  
     Inconceivably freighted  
 With pageants of substance, and colour, and mo-  
     tion.*

*Oh, the wonders of sight and of sound  
 As the great wheel spins dizzily round!  
 Oh, the terror, amazement, delight!  
 Oh, the music and wailing, the laughter and  
     cries!  
 Oh, the numberless faces and eyes  
 Full of beauty or dread! Oh, the shapes that  
     arise  
 And abide but a moment, then vanish and  
     change  
 Into features and forms more unspeakably  
     strange!  
 For, behold! as I gaze, all the substance of life  
 With itself is at strife,  
     And for ever is fleeing,  
 And for ever pursued from disguise to disguise,*

*Still eludes and recoils, still survives and  
escapes*

*In the masks of divine, inexhaustible shapes—  
Now a goddess's tear, now a pearl in the ocean,  
Now a bird, now a worm, now a flower, now  
a flame—*

*An unknowable essence, incessantly ranging  
Through dædal surprises, unchangeably changing  
Yet single and permanent, effluent,  
Refluent,  
Ever and never the same!*

*Grasp my hand; hold me fast!*

*For the wheel takes my breath  
As it whirls its ineffable pageantry past;  
And I strain in fierce gaze into distance to see  
The dark goal where existence begins not  
to be—*

*Where life lapses to death.*

*But the great wheel goes spinning  
To an end as unknown as the mystic beginning—  
Goes dizzily spinning, alive and full-freighted  
To the void  
Of the cancelled, abolished, destroyed,  
From the void of the vast uncreated!*

*O my soul, in what region unknown,  
Far removed beyond thought, did I see  
The vast shape of a beautiful Woman, who sat all  
alone*

*With the wheel at her knee !  
And I saw that the wheel was rotation of time,  
And the wool of her spinning  
Was life—but the fleece  
Was a secret withdrawn beyond winning.*

*Alone in her beauty, she sat there and spun ;  
And she sang a sweet rhyme  
Out of pleasure—or solace, perchance—for a task  
never done ;  
But the sound of the wheel in her ears was a low  
woolly drone  
That disturbed not her peace ;  
And I cried, but she laboured unconscious, serene ;  
For desire nor appeal can attain to her  
there,  
And I never shall know  
If the task of her wheel be a joy or a woe,  
And whether she sits as a slave or a queen,  
In a region that lies beyond worship and  
prayer !*

“O life, O death! O mysteries of Fate  
Which stun the brain and palsy action!

Eat,

Old father, cheerfully, and thank the gods  
That hunger saves us from the vast inane!”

The Centaur smiled and laid aside his lyre.  
A little while he stood with dreamy eyes  
And folded arms; then tossed his cloudy hair  
Backward and faced the heavens with tranquil  
front:—

“Insatiable, we know not what we would,  
We would not what we know! The best of life  
Is action—not the dream of action, thought.  
Old father, thou art right. A golden time  
Was that blithe morning of a merry world,  
When newly felled the pines of Pelion swam  
Into the radiant East; and glad in strength  
The flower of Minyan Heroes swept the blue  
With those stout firs I sent them from the heights.  
For rowing joyously with laugh and song  
By flowery isles and green-embowered shores,  
They saw the eternal snows of Caucasus  
Flushed with the rose of morning—saw the blue

Clear beauty of the glacier ice, the pines  
Shining with tinted snow ; and lo ! the while  
An eagle, black against the glow of dawn  
Sailed in great circles round the glittering peak,  
They heard Prometheus groan. But Herakles  
Smote off those cankering bonds of bronze and ice,  
And loosed the patient human-hearted god.  
And when the Heroes landed in the East  
And won the Fleece, my Jason brought aboard  
The beautiful dark woman of his love,  
His bane and after-sorrow. All the sea  
Danced, garlanded with white and azure flowers,  
For pleasure of their coming, as they swept,  
With great oars flashing, homeward ; all the sea  
Lightened and laughed around my swimming trees,  
And floating upward through the blossomy foam,  
Smiled sweet wild faces ; and the rovers saw  
On that, but never any other day,  
The strange white beauty of the ocean-girls  
Caverned in glassy hollows of the waves.

But leaning over Argo's gladdened pines,  
Peleus, my daughter's child, with throbbing brows  
Watched the bright girls whose wheels in spinning  
make

The everlasting murmur of the sea ;  
And as he watched, beheld one sweetest face  
Set in bright hair and crowned with ocean flowers—  
One sweetest face with dewy lustrous eyes  
And features rosy with desire of love ;  
And as the clear wave shoaled above her, saw  
Bosom and limbs more fair than mortal maid's  
But shaped and coloured like a mortal maid's,  
And more than any maid's desirable.

In after-time when all that golden quest  
Was ended, and the pines of Argo bleached  
On Corinth strand, that loveliest of the sea,  
Grown weary of the unwearable deep,  
Lay curled in slumber in the Sepian cave.  
Athwart the violet twilight Hesperus  
Shone large and golden ; full and golden rose  
The moon above the fleecy folds of sleep ;  
But Peleus, stealing through the myrtle grove,  
A goddess won that night to be his bride.

All Thessaly was one flowered holiday  
When they were wedded. Toil flung cap in air,  
Set idle hands akimbo, and moved his feet  
To sprightly measures of the bridal pipes.

Thy glittering house, Pharsalus, was rejoiced  
To hold so many cities for thy guests,—  
For Phthia trooped from Tempe to thy feast,  
Larissa left her far-off shining walls,  
Rich presents Cranon brought thee in her lap,  
Yea, Scyros, leaping from her bowery rocks,  
Came to thee rowing gladly from the sea.

I, too, descending from mine ancient cave,  
Bore sylvan gifts—great garlands full of scent  
And gracious colour, wrought of all the flowers  
That grow in warm low fields or make a fire  
In rocky nooks, or haunting murmurous streams  
Draw honey from the waters. These I bore,  
And pleasant boughs from many a goodly tree ;  
And all the palace laughed when they were hung.

But one there came to that far-rumoured feast,  
Unasked, a wrathful guest, and marred the feast ;  
For casting on the board a golden fruit  
To who was fairest, with a bitter laugh  
She stalked away : but, flushed with jealous strife,  
The heavenly queens who graced my grandson's  
board  
Contended for the golden husk in vain,



And so departed with resentful brows  
And sullen eyes, and left an empty house,  
And all that gorgeous bridal closed in gloom !”

A sound of voices as the Centaur spoke—  
Clear youthful voices singing all together—  
Came floating upward to the snowy peak ;  
And ever as the voices paused, the rocks  
Sent back the closing cadence of the song.

“ These be my lads ! ” said Chiron with a smile,  
“ The beautiful children trusted to my love  
By kings of many cities. Home they come  
With quarry from the chase. My merry boys !  
The mountain loves to hear them ! ”

And the song  
Came floating through the pinewood to the peak :—

*“ Along the mountain as we go—  
Halloo—halloo !  
Our voices echo to and fro—  
Halloo—halloo !  
Around us tracts of heather glow  
And blue lakes slumber far below ;  
Halloo—halloo !*

*Gaily the mountain mocks us so—  
Halloo, halloo—halloo, halloo!*

*Voices a hundred years ago—  
Halloo—halloo!  
Awoke perchance these echoes so;  
Halloo—halloo!  
Hearts gladdened at the heather's glow,  
And bright eyes scanned the lakes below,  
Halloo—halloo!  
Gaily they went!—And we shall go.  
Halloo, halloo—halloo, halloo!*

*Gaily they went: and men will go—  
Halloo—halloo!  
A hundred years hence even so—  
Halloo—halloo!  
When we are dust, and none can know  
How glad we were long, long ago!  
Halloo—halloo!  
Men are as mist the strong winds blow!  
Halloo, halloo—halloo, halloo!*

*Men are as mist—they rise and go—  
Halloo—halloo!*

*The mountain stays for evermoe!*

*Halloo—halloo!*

*They drift where heather and bracken grow—*

*Their voices echo to and fro—*

*Halloo—halloo!*

*Grimly the mountain mocks them so!*

*Halloo, halloo—halloo, halloo!"*

“Ay, even so, boys! mortals are as mist—  
They fleet and vanish, but the mountain stays.  
The mountain does not miss them—has not missed  
Those fair bright lads who loved his heights so  
well

A hundred years ago. On Corinth strand  
Was Jason slain in slumber, while he lay  
In Argo's shadow. From her sides a pine—  
A cankered pine of Pelion—broke and fell  
And slew the prince, but Pelion made no moan.  
And Peleus sits unsceptred on the shore,  
An ancient body, frail and white with age.  
Patient he sits beside the Sepian cave,  
Where in that violet twilight of old time,  
He won that deathless bride, and first received  
Her beauteous body with his hands. He waits  
Her coming from the sea—for she will come

With sweet wild faces smiling through the foam,  
And bright heads crowned with white and azure  
    flowers,  
To take him to her own immortal home.  
Patient he sits and childless in his age,  
For this wild gathering of the ships for Troy  
Hath plucked the filial staves from old men's  
    hands,—  
Achilles with the rest. Such bitter fruit  
Hath been that golden curse the Accursèd cast  
Upon the marriage table !”

Chiron paused ;

And gazing far beyond the clustered Isles  
Towards Ida and the fateful Asian plains,  
He murmured : “ It may be some seed of good  
Shall sprout and blossom from that golden ill—  
Some germ of concord, amity and peace  
Spring from that core of discord.

From the first

One equal blue hath covered all men's heads,  
But underfoot the restless sons of men,  
Through ages when no single will was law,  
Have parcelled out the earth with envious greed,

Till now a brook that needs no stepping-stone,  
A mountain-track, puts men from men apart  
In tribal isolation. Now at last  
This grievous Dardan wrong, this common shame,  
Hath prompted a confederate revenge,  
And taught the wisdom of united spears.  
This common shame foreshadows common weal,  
And time will come when, schooled by violence,  
Mycenæ, Athens, Phthia, looking up,  
Shall see o'erhead no little local heaven,  
But gladly share beneath a wider blue  
The roof-tree of one nation—one in blood,  
In language one, and one in deathless fame.  
That time shall come, though haply long delayed  
By public folly, private interest,  
And ere its advent many woes and wars  
Shall make the life of men a bitter thing,  
And wheresoever corn in all the land  
Is sown, women shall mourn the strong men  
slain—  
The husbands and the young men beautiful—  
And blinding tears shall spoil the sickle-strokes  
Of maidens reaping in the harvest-fields.  
Such years of trouble will it take to school  
Cities and kings to wisdom.

What complaint  
Was that of thine, old man—the sad estate  
Of common men whom no god ever needs?  
But now I tell thee and do thou give heed,  
If not the gods, why man needs men's best service.  
For truly, as I deem, gods, heroes, men  
Are all one wool upon the flying wheel.  
Kings are but men and gods but greater kings,  
In birth unequal, of unequal lot,  
But all of one same primal seed divine,—  
For still between the highest and the least  
The bridal fruits attest the kindred strain.  
Immortal none, I take it, though their bloom  
Outlasts man's hoariest longevity ;  
For many a lineage of those deathless gods  
Hath vanished like a sunset from the heavens,  
And those now throned above the summer clouds  
In turn shall pass away. Or if indeed  
They be undying in some subtle sense  
The mind conceives of but by glimpse and hint,  
Their masked divinity shall walk the earth  
In human flesh and blood. In banished fields  
Still shall Apollo drive his plough—a slave ;  
And Zeus still chain Prometheus to the peak ;  
And Aphrodite, holding in her hand

The golden apple of Eris, shall embroil  
Predestined cities till the world shall end.  
But Zeus and all the regnant gods shall pass,  
And other gods shall thunder from their seats  
And follow them to darkness, till at last  
An age will come—oh, there will come an age  
When perfect manhood shall be man's sole god—  
A god indeed immortal, joyous, strong,—  
A god most beautiful and most benign.  
But man hath utter need of common men  
To speed the coming of that better time,  
To speed the building of that godlike state  
Of world-wide brotherhood, abundant cheer,  
Peace amaranthine, freedom unrestrained  
Save by the checks of chastened temperament.  
That future is far away. These petty states  
Have hardly yet awakened to the dawn  
Of nationality. What gleam, one asks,  
What hope is there of that more radiant dawn  
When nations, housed beneath a common roof,  
Shall form one family of equal men?  
And yet, unless my dreams of man and time  
Be mere marsh-glimmerings of a muddy brain,  
That time must come. And all may speed the  
time—

Not Heroes only, but all living flesh,  
And thou, old father, mayst achieve thy share."

As Chiron spoke, from Æta's distant height  
Rose smoke, gleamed fire; and, wreathed above  
the fire

Which waxed and brightened momentarily, the smoke  
Caught splendour as of gold and blood, and  
thronged

The western heavens with drifts of glowing light.  
The Centaur watched the blaze with curious eyes,  
And thought, the witless churl hath fired the woods;  
But with a bitter laugh the Thrall replied:  
"That distant time *may* come; but while the grass  
Is growing?"

Chiron answered with a frown:  
"Be glad to starve, then! Come what time there  
may,  
Thou still must die; and is it no relief  
To die with such a future in thy gaze  
And know the children of thy children's children—  
Some filial echo of *thee* in some far age—  
Shall through thy being pluck the perfect flower  
Of that blest state for which thou couldst but  
strive?"



“ I have no children,” said the aged Thrall.

“ Therein, indeed, old man, I pity thee.

The excellence of men is perfected  
In children better than themselves.”

His words

Were broken short, for, panting from the woods,  
Came one with clenched hands and dripping chin,  
A runner spent, who fell at Chiron's feet  
And gasped :—“ He writhes in mortal agonies ;  
The fiery poison chars him to the bone ;”—  
And told in voluble bewildered speech  
How Dejanira, sick at heart with doubt  
And vexed with thought of Iole's girlish face,  
Had sent to Herakles—oh fatal gift !—  
A wondrous tunic charmed to win his love  
And woo him homeward to her widowed arms ;  
But steeped in mortal venom fierce as flame,  
The accursed vesture charred him to the bone,  
And searched his blackened flesh with fiery pangs  
Intolerable. Without or tear or groan  
Did Herakles endure that deadly love  
Of Dejanira ; but as anguish grew  
He bade his people bear him in their hands

To Zeus his father's ancient mountain-peak,  
And build on Æta's top a funeral pile  
Of pines and oaks and lentisks—trees and shrubs  
Grown on those hallowed heights from age to age—  
And lay him on the pile and place his club  
Beneath his head and quickly fire the pile.

“But I bethought me, Chiron, of thy skill  
And fled with frantic feet!”

A mighty hand

The Centaur stretched towards Æta in reply:  
“That flame already hath loosened from all pain  
All that could yield to pain in Herakles.”

Even as the sunset heaps the west with fire,  
But all the east is cold and naked blue  
Save for a solitary silver cloud,  
And that lone cloud reflects the gleam and glow—  
So blazed the pyre on Æta, so the flush  
Of those heroic brands incarnadined  
The sorrowing Chiron's silvery head and beard.

“Farewell, a long farewell,” the Centaur sighed,  
“To thee, great-hearted toiler of the world!  
Farewell, thou strongest, who hast taught mankind

That cheerful courage in its resolute hug  
May crack the ribs of very death. Farewell !  
It was thy lot—thy mighty heart forbade  
That it should be thy doom—to labour still  
For others, and with blithe goodwill obey  
The bidding of the cowardly and base !

And I could weep that never any more  
Shall these sad eyes behold thy godlike form,  
These hands in welcome clasp thy conquering  
    hands—  
Save that my tears would shame a joyous life  
Of splendid strife and superhuman toil.

Farewell, if vanished men may yet fare well—  
If that prevision of the Happy Isles  
Be no mere hollow image of desire ;  
If still the good enjoy the blessed sun  
Through one long summer day, and never more  
Vex there their lives with strivings of their hands,  
But ocean breezes blow about the Isles,  
And flowers of gold blaze, some along the ground,  
By running water some, and some on trees,  
And these the happy garland for their heads  
And fill their hands withal !

Thou, too, old man,  
Fare wisely and well. My kindly lads will lead  
Thine aged footsteps homeward, lest the beast  
Which prowls the forest take thee for a prey.  
Farewell ; and when the frail repining years  
Distress thy painful body, take a thought  
How mere an atom, insignificant,  
In all the world art thou ; how better men  
Have found life still more hard ; and when thy  
mind  
Is querulous with peevish impotence,  
Take courage somewhat in the thought that thou  
Hast, like the limpet on the rock, thy use.

Lads, guide him down ; and, father, bear with  
thee  
The cup thou'st drunk from. It may be the gold  
Will save thee from a master's angry strokes,  
And change to smiles his dame's resentful frown !”

Down through the pine-wood to the fruitful lawns  
The princes led the Thrall ; and as he went  
The aged man, with brain bewildered, watched  
The smouldering brands of Herakles, and thought  
Of Peleus sitting on the lonely shore.

The years have gone in thousands since the Thrall  
Descended from the mountain ; but the might  
Of Pelion still abides ; his snow-cap gleams  
High up against the sun ; his shelving sides  
Are hung with four-and-twenty villages  
Whose white walls glimmer through the terraced  
    bowers ;

His vines, his bees, his waters still remain.

The brooks of Pelion through the houses laugh  
In marble channels, and the turbaned Turk,  
Soothed by the waters in the summer heats,  
Smokes in grave luxury. Full of pleasant shade  
And pleasant babblement chestnuts and planes  
Stand green i' the ancient sun, but woe the while,  
The forest and the foresters are gone—  
Save one ; for lo ! on yon the topmost peak  
Stands Chiron dreaming still, for wise men say  
The Centaur was nought other than a cloud,  
And Herakles in every sunset dies ;  
So, that famed school of Chiron was perchance  
A splendid image—how in intercourse  
With cloud and sun and wood and mountain, men  
Grew virile to enjoy and to endure  
With temperance and cheerful fortitude.

## POEMS OF CHILDHOOD.

## . LAUS INFANTIUM.

**I**N praise of little children I will say  
 God first made man, then found a better way  
 For woman, but his third way was the best.  
 Of all created things the loveliest  
 And most divine are children. Nothing here  
 Can be to us more gracious or more dear.  
 And though when God saw all his works were good  
 There was no rosy flower of babyhood,  
 'Twas said of children in a later day  
 That none could enter Heaven save such as they.

The earth, which feels the flowering of a thorn,  
 Was glad, O little child, when you were born ;

The earth, which thrills when skylarks scale the  
blue,  
Soared up itself to God's own Heaven in you ;

And Heaven, which loves to lean down and to  
glass  
Its beauty in each dewdrop on the grass—  
Heaven laughed to find your face so pure and fair,  
And left, O little child, its reflex there !

(ANY FATHER.)

WE talked of you ; in happy dreams  
Our hearts foretold you,  
O little Blossom !  
And yet how marvellous it seems  
To see and hold you !  
We guessed you boy, we guessed you maid,  
Right glad of either ;  
How like, how unlike all we said,  
Upon her knee there,  
You lie and twit us,  
O little Blossom !





(ANY MOTHER.)

SO sweet, so strange—so strange, so sweet  
Beyond expression,  
O little Blossom !  
To sit and feel my bosom beat  
With glad possession ;  
For you are ours, our very own,  
None other's, ours ;  
God made you of *our* two hearts alone,  
As God makes flowers  
Of earth and sunshine,  
O little Blossom !

(A PHILOSOPHER.)

YES, you may let them creep about the rug.  
And stir the fire ! Aha ! that's bright and  
snug.

To think these mites — ay, nurse, unfold the  
screen !—

Should be as ancient as the Miocene ;  
That ages back beneath a palm-tree's shade  
These rosy little quadrupeds have played,  
Have cried for moons or mammoths, and have  
blacked

Their faces round the Drift Man's fire—in fact,  
That ever since the articulate race began  
These babes have been the joy and plague of  
man !

Unnoticed by historian and sage,  
These bright-eyed chits have been from age to age  
The one supreme majority. I find

Mankind hath been their slaves, and womankind  
Their worshippers ; and both have lived in dread  
Of time and tyrants ; toiled and wept and bled,  
Because of some quaint elves they called their  
own.

Had little ones in Egypt been unknown,  
No Pharaoh would have had the power, methinks,  
To pile the Pyramids or carve the Sphinx.

Take them to bed, nurse ; but before she goes  
Papa must toast his little woman's toes.  
Strange that such feeble hands and feet as these  
Have sped the lamp-race of the centuries !

(A POET.)

THE sun, the sea, the forest wild—  
All nature loves a little child.

“Hence ! to the woods and earn your bread !”

The woods were deep with drifted snow.

“Seek till you find where violets blow,  
And bring them home,” the step-dame said

The sun, the sea, the forest wild—  
All nature loves a little child.

Weeping she wandered through the snow ;  
The way was lone ; the wind was bleak ;  
Weeping she went ; she could not speak—  
Her little heart was choked with woe.

The sun, the sea, the forest wild—  
All nature loves a little child.

Her own dear mother, if she'd known,  
    Had turned to violets in the mould ;  
    But oh ! the snow lay deep, and cold  
Had frozen all the earth to stone.

The sun, the sea, the forest wild—  
All nature loves a little child.

Within the woods the homeless maid  
    Found wreaths of snow and leafless trees.  
    She wanders on until she sees  
A great fire in a wintry glade.

The sun, the sea, the forest wild—  
All nature loves a little child.

Approach, dear child, and have no fear !  
    Twelve stones were lying on the ground,  
    And twelve strange men were sitting round  
The gladsome fire as she drew near.

The sun, the sea, the forest wild—  
All nature loves a little child.

And one, upon the largest stone,  
Who held a staff the chief appeared.  
Oh, white and old was he. His beard  
Into his very lap had grown.

The sun, the sea, the forest wild—  
All nature loves a little child.

The old chief smiled, and cried : “ Soho !  
What is’t the little woman seeks ? ”  
With great tears running down her cheeks,  
She spoke and told him all her woe.

The sun, the sea, the forest wild—  
All nature loves a little child.

“ I have no violets, my dear ;  
My name is January,” he said ;  
“ But March has flowers ”—March bowed his  
head—  
“ Change places, Brother March ; come here ! ”

The sun, the sea, the forest wild—  
All nature loves a little child.

March sat on January's seat ;  
The snow-drifts melted ; grass was seen ;  
The trees exhaled a mist of green ;  
Soft breezes made the woodland sweet.

The sun, the sea, the forest wild—  
All nature loves a little child.

And violets sprang in magic store,  
And strewed with purple all the glade.  
Oh, happy, happy little maid,  
Fill full your tattered pinafore !

The sun, the sea, the forest wild—  
All nature loves a little child.

A lark piped silvery on a cloud.  
“There !” March cried gaily ; “run away !  
What ever will your step-dame say ?”  
And all the Twelve laughed glad and loud.

The sun, the sea, the forest wild—  
All nature loves a little child.

## APPLE-BLOOM AND APPLE.

WHEN little Osy, two years old,  
Once saw the Spring sun dapple  
The apple-bloom with blurs of gold,  
She asked me for an apple.

“There are no apples, darling, yet ;  
The bloom’s still white and rosy ;  
Wait till the harvest, then you’ll get——”  
“I tannot wait,” said Osy.

I told her of the changing year,  
The nipping frost, the raw gust,  
The clement rain, the sunny cheer,  
From April on to August.



“So wait till Autumn paints them red,  
And makes them sweet for eating !”  
“No, *shake* them down, pa !” Osy said,  
With great blue eyes entreating.

I can't resist a mouth that pouts  
And trembles, ripe for crying ;  
I cannot bear the first sad doubts  
In large eyes so relying.

I shook the trunk ; the branches snowed  
Till all the grass was whitened ;  
The blue jay darted down the road,<sup>s</sup>  
And screamed that he was frightened.

Of course I shook and shook in vain,  
And Osy, standing under,  
Laughed and shrugged off the blossomy rain,  
Till glee was changed to wonder ;

And wonder turned to pain and doubt ;  
Her eyes grew full and pleading ;  
Her quivering lips began to pout ;  
Her fists were closed for kneading ;

And then there rose a long sharp cry,  
As if her heart were breaking :—  
“You see, my darling child,” said I,  
“Apples don’t grow with shaking.”

One day when all the apple-tree  
With fruit was bowed and ruddy,  
Osy, with dolly on her knee,  
Sat in a child’s brown study.

The west wind came with pleasant sound,  
And as the leaves were turning,  
An apple tumbled to the ground,  
And lay there plump and burning.

And Osy’s face grew bright and glad,  
From her dim day-dream waking—  
A touch had given what could be had  
Not for a world of shaking.

THE WINTER SLEEP.

WHEN snow began she tried to make  
No noise—was frugal in her mirth ;  
She feared her childish romps might break  
The winter slumber of the Earth.

When roofs shook down the thawing snow,  
And snowdrops peeped—what joyous cries !  
Had not dear Earth begun to throw  
The clothes off, and to open eyes ?

But when once more the snow came down,  
And hoar-frost whitened every pane,  
Her brows were puckered in a frown,  
The change perplexed her little brain.

She thought and thought how this might be ;  
At last, “ Oh my, papa ! ” she cried ;  
“ We thought she was awake—but she  
Has only turned upon her side ! ”

## AN APRIL GRIEF.

WITH little breast that wildly heaved,  
With streaming eyes and hair uncurled,  
She sat and sobbed—as if she grieved  
For all the woes of all the world.

A sudden pause! She raised her head  
In puzzled thought, and still a tear  
Hung, like a dewdrop, as she said:  
“Why was I crying, mamma dear?”

“Because I took poor Pussy’s part.”  
Then all the woes beneath the skies  
Once more convulsed that little heart  
And rained from those despairing eyes!

Oh, never in the coming years,  
My darling, may it be your lot  
To know a grief too deep for tears,  
Or one that *cannot* be forgot!

## THE GREAT WORLD.

A WILD adventurer, he loved to fare  
On wondrous voyages from chair to chair.  
He coasted wall and furniture until  
He reached the Indies of his wayward will.  
His quests recalled th' intrepid days of yore  
When tars who woo'd the ocean hugged the shore ;  
When sirens sang to port and birds to lee,  
And rigging brushed the blossom from the tree.  
But one spring afternoon a breeze from Spain  
Awoke a small Columbus in his brain ;  
His legs felt sturdy under him ; the door,  
Through which he'd never passed alone before,  
Opened on marvels. Brightness, sound and scent  
Called him to go and play with them. He went.

He reached the middle of the village green,  
Then stopped and gazed. Great nature, what a  
scene !

On every side to distances untold  
The grass in vast savannas round him rolled.  
The cottages were leagues and leagues away.  
The enormous spaces that about him lay  
Seemed glad to find him little and alone.  
A thousand miles up, great white clouds were  
    blown  
Across a sky as bright and clear as glass,  
And here their shadows raced across the grass.  
Cloud-gazing made one's little senses reel,  
For all the sky seemed, like a glittering wheel,  
To turn clean over.

    With uneasy mind,  
He marked the tall trees waving in the wind.  
Each tossed its great green arms and wagged its  
    head  
So grimly that he held his breath for dread.  
How had he vexed the beech, the elm, the fir?  
Their dreadful voices told how vexed they were.

He thought of home, for what can harm or hurt  
The child whose fingers clutch his mother's skirt?  
He turned to seek the refuge of the wise—  
But oh, the horror of those startled eyes!

Between him and that far-off cottage door  
Swayed the green terror of a sycamore.  
The great tree rocks above him, cries, expands,  
And strives to snatch him with a hundred hands.

Oh, never till this moment had he known  
How terrible it was to be alone ;  
Never till now been clear that he was he,  
Not one with earth and air and stone and tree,  
But something different and quite apart.  
And now dismay has filled his little heart.  
He drops upon the grass ; the earth and skies  
Collapse about him as he sobs and cries.

Oh joy of joys ! a friend, a helper hears  
His piteous wail, compassionates his tears.  
A furry head is rubbed against his cheek ;  
Against his hair, a body soft and sleek.  
It is—it is his Puss ! O Pussy dear,  
Listen to all his woes, and you shall hear  
The strangest story child told cat since—mark !  
The tiger sneezed the first puss in the ark.

Child's dreams, child's memories are so blent that we  
Can scarce trace shining cloud from shining sea.

Did Pussy laugh and tell him—who can say?—  
He need not mind the skies ; it was their way.  
That as for size and distance, after all  
The whole world was comparatively small ;  
That big things would grow little, far things near  
As he grew old ; that trees had made men fear  
Ever since mother Eve plucked fruit from bough ;  
'Twas but a freak of theirs to mop and mow,  
And catch at stars and clouds with aguish arm ;  
Green foolish giants they, they did no harm.

Did Pussy in her wisdom answer thus ?  
Strange sympathies united him and Puss  
In those dim days of wonder and romance,  
And sympathy projected speech perchance.  
In any case, his arms he flung around  
Dear Puss, and almost hugged her off the ground ;  
Got firm on foot ; began to recognise  
No tree could see him if he shut his eyes ;  
Set off, determined never more to roam  
When once safe housed.

So Pussy led him home.



A NEW POET.

I WRITE. He sits beside my chair  
And scribbles too in hushed delight ;  
He dips his pen in charmèd air ;  
What is it he pretends to write ?

He toils and toils ; the paper gives  
No clue to ought he thinks. What then ?  
His little heart is glad ; he lives  
The poems that he cannot pen.

Strange fancies throng that baby brain.  
What grave sweet looks ! What earnest eyes !  
He stops—reflects—and now again  
His unrecording pen he plies.

It seems a satire on myself—  
These dreamy nothings scrawled in air,  
This thought, this work ! Oh, tricky elf,  
Wouldst drive thy father to despair ?

Despair ! Ah, no ; the heart, the mind  
Persists in hoping,—schemes and strives  
That there may linger with our kind  
Some memory of our little lives.

Beneath his rock i' the early world  
Smiling the naked hunter lay,  
And sketched on horn the spear he hurled,  
The urus which he made his prey.

Like him I strive in hope my rhymes  
May keep my name a little while.—  
O child, who knows how many times  
We two have made the angels smile !

THE LADDER.

I N our woodyard one apple-tree  
Quite touched the sky, I knew ;  
For when the boughs swung I could see  
Blue bits of heaven break through.

The big red apples glittered bright  
So high up in the sun,  
An angel, without stooping, might  
Have plucked the topmost one.

A long, green-painted ladder leant  
Among the boughs ;—'twas odd,  
But I was sure that ladder went  
Right up the tree to God.

I longed to climb and see His place,  
But then I was so young—  
Just two—and what a fearful space  
Divided rung from rung !

## THE UPWARD LOOK.

I CRIED because I was afraid.  
Strange people came about the place ;  
They'd laid my mother in a chest,  
And spread a cloth upon her face.  
And then they whispered up and down ;  
And all of them were dressed in black ;  
And women that I did not know  
Kissed me and said, " Poor little Jack !"  
And then the great black horses came—  
Their tails trailed almost on the ground—  
And there were feathers on the coach,  
And all the neighbours stood around.

And when the horses went away,  
The house no longer seemed the same,  
And I grew frightened, and I called  
For Mother ; but she never came,

And so I cried ! But then my Aunt  
Came weeping when she heard my cries ;  
And I was such a little thing  
I looked up to her streaming eyes.

I looked up to her streaming eyes !  
And it has often seemed since then,  
At times of threatening, doubt, distress,  
That, full-grown to the life of men,  
Just so have I looked up—just so  
Some being of a higher sphere,  
Aware of laws from me concealed,  
Has downward looked and dropped a tear—  
A tear of pity for the pain  
That I must feel when I've outgrown  
This larger childhood, and have learned  
To know myself as I am known.

## THE ROBIN.

WHEN ice is black upon the pond,  
And woods and ways are choked with  
snow,  
The Robin flutters in !  
The little maids with wide glad eyes  
Stand spell-bound lest a breath or sign  
Should scare him from his crumbs.

Oft when the fire is keen with frost,  
And blinds are drawn and candles lit—  
O Robin, flutter in !—  
They sit around the cosy hearth,  
And hear with wondering love and awe  
How Robin's breast grew red.

Fond little maids ! each fancies now  
That somewhere in the great white snow—  
O Robin, flutter in !—

That somewhere in the tracts of snow,  
An icy cross forsaken stands,  
    And Christ hangs pale and dead !

A childish fancy? Be it so !  
And let me ever be a child,  
    With Robins fluttering in,  
Than grow into the man who sees  
In wintry wastes of unbelief  
    A phantom Christ and Cross !

## BIRTH AND DEATH.

SHE came to us in storm and snow—  
The little one we held so dear—  
And all the world was full of woe,  
And war and famine plagued the year ;  
And ships were wrecked and fields were drowned,  
And thousands died for lack of bread ;  
In such a troubled time we found  
That sweet mouth to be kissed and fed.

But oh, we were a happy pair,  
Through all the war and want and woe ;  
Though not a heart appeared to care,  
And no one even seemed to know.

She left us in the blithe increase  
Of glowing fruit and ripening corn,  
When all the nations were at peace,  
And plenty held a brimming horn—



When we at last were well to do,  
And life was sweet, and earth was gay ;  
In that glad time of cloudless blue  
Our little darling passed away.

And oh, we were a wretched pair  
In all the gladness and the glow ;  
And not a heart appeared to care,  
And no one even seemed to know.

## SUSPIRIUM.

THESE little shoes!—How proud she was of  
these!

Can you forget how, sitting on your knees,  
She used to prattle volubly, and raise  
Her tiny feet to win your wondering praise?  
Was life too rough for feet so softly shod,  
That now she walks in Paradise with God,  
Leaving but these—whereon to dote and muse—  
These little shoes?

1870.

## THE STONE FACE.

L O! here the first sun strikes the cold grey  
peak—

Broad August! and in shining wreaths the mist  
Creeps up from crag to crag against the dawn,  
While far below, still sleeping in the dusk,  
Ringed from the great world's trouble and unrest,  
The little mountain village lies a-row,  
Fringed with the fragrant selvage of the pines.

Descend the glimmering pass, and as you go,—  
The sun outrunning you with golden feet  
Till all the red-tiled, white-walled rustic world  
Laughs out, from grass to gilded weather-cock,  
With gladsome colour and with breezy life—  
Look backward to the peak! Look back and  
pause!

For lo! the huge grey crags will all have blent  
And grown into a countenance of stone:

An aged, sweet, majestic face, whose eyes,  
With wondrous human tenderness, look down  
Upon the valley and the little lives  
That come and go in their eternal gaze.

In the dim days of old, when snowy beards  
Belied the childlike hearts that ne'er grew grey,  
A strange tradition in the valley told  
How in the golden future should be born,  
Within the range of those calm kindly eyes,  
A child, the need and succour of his times,  
A boy whose face should be in flesh and blood  
A reflex of that grave, sweet face of stone.

The little lives went ever to and fro,  
Toiled, suffered, loved, enjoyed, and passed away;  
The generations died—the legend lived!  
A legend only—a legend often told,  
Cherished and half believed, for, evermore,  
The aged and majestic face looked down  
With wondrous human tenderness and truth.

'Twas Christmas night, two hundred years ago.  
Deep on the hills the snow lay; deep and white,  
Lay hushing all the valley, road and roof,

Until the clock struck midnight. Then the bells  
Rang in the holly and the mistletoe ;  
Rang in the merry maskers and the waits ;  
Rang in all gentle thoughts and generous cheer ;  
And lanterns glimmered on the fleecy roads,  
And sounds of singing moved from house to  
house.

Soft rosy lights filled all the frosty heavens  
With tremulous floating splendour, and the stars  
Shone keen and golden through it, and the wind  
Blew little flakes of cloud like leaves of flowers  
Across the night ; and in the magical  
Warm flush of colour, every icy peak,  
And all the long white ridges of the hills,  
The snowy village roofs, the ghostly pines,  
Sprang out with startling clearness ; and the face—  
The great stone face, now bearded with the snow,  
And looking old—so old—with hoary hair—  
Seemed to lean closer in the rosy light ;  
And that same night a peasant's child was born !

The babe throve lustily and grew apace ;  
The years went by, and when the great blue eyes  
Had learned to trace that visage on the heights,  
The mother told the legend of old days,

The promise of that happy future time.  
And marvelling, the lad drank in the tale,  
Mused on it, watched the aged face of stone,  
And longed for that bright future—longed to see  
In living flesh and blood that gracious mien,  
And those dark eyes of majesty. Strange dreams  
Awakened in his heart, as day by day  
He raised his ardent eyes up to the peaks—  
Strange dreams of helpfulness to all the world,  
Of wisdom and of power to right all wrong,  
To lift the fallen, soothe the sick at heart,  
Make life more beautiful and brighten death.

He nurtured his keen boyhood on the thoughts  
Of great dead men, nor overlooked the lore  
Of that green throbbing world of flower and plant,  
Bird, reptile, insect, rock, and passing cloud ;  
And all he learnt grew into melody  
Within his heart.

The Vicar marked the lad,  
Advised him, lent him books, and gave him aid  
To master those great tongues, now tongues no  
more—  
Eye-symbols and a music of the brain—

Until at length, when he had quite outgrown  
His little wondering self and now could look  
Upon the mighty face of stone and smile  
To think with what a simple passionate faith  
He had believed that myth,—the rocky mask  
Had half-fulfilled the promise of the myth,  
And stamped some semblance of its tenderness  
And large sweet power upon the student's mind.

Friends were not wanting to the youth, and soon  
He left his humble cottage in the hills  
And laboured in the city's learnèd halls,  
Toiled day and night to win the glorious meed  
Of being helpful unto all the world,  
Of being wise with power to right some wrong,  
To lift the fallen, soothe the sick at heart,  
Make life more beautiful and brighten death.

Nor laboured vainly ; for when he returned,  
Once more and saw the face among the peaks—  
And smiled at childish memories, his friend,  
The aged Vicar, was content to rest  
And let the younger man achieve for both.

Years sped in glad whole-hearted toil. He served,  
From early manhood to a reverend age

The peaceful peasant people ; ministered  
In helpful sympathetic ways ; fulfilled  
In days of famine, sickness, hopeless need,  
The golden promise of the legend old ;  
Became, unconsciously and unobserved,  
All that the village folk had hoped in him  
Who should resemble that great face of stone.

When old age came upon him, oft he stood  
And gazed with dim fond eyes upon the face  
Whose gracious semblance of humanity  
Had thrilled his childish heart and filled his life  
With noblest duties ; often too he told,  
With frail hand laid upon the little head  
Of lass or lad, the legend of the face.

Like all the little lives that come and go  
Before the steadfast gaze of those stone eyes,  
He too departed, full of years and honour.  
And as he lay dead, cold ; his beard like snow  
Scattered in silvery masses on his breast ;  
And looking old—so old—with hoary hair  
Loose on the pillow ; and his people gazed  
The last time on those kindly lineaments,  
They felt a sudden tremor round their hearts,



For lo! the face seemed changed—familiar still,  
But changed in some wise strangely. Then at length  
One gazed and turning to the window drew  
The curtains open. Snow was on the hills,  
And snow hushed all the valley, and rosy lights  
Filled all the frosty heavens, and the face—  
The vast stone visage, in the tremulous flush  
Seemed to lean closer, and the gazers saw  
*His* and those great stone features were the same.

And this was Christmas night, but all was still !

A hundred years ago and folk yet lived  
Who saw those faces, knew they were the same. \*  
But generations die and legends live !  
The little lives beneath those eyes eterne  
Toil, suffer, love, enjoy, and pass away ;  
And still the people in the valley tell  
How in the golden future will be born  
A child, the need and succour of his times,  
A boy whose face shall be in flesh and blood  
A reflex of that grave sweet face of stone !  
A legend only, never gravely told,  
Not even half believed in these shrewd days  
When childhood listens with a grey-beard's heart !

## SONG.

MAKING morning-mirth  
Larks were singing loud  
Over flowery earth,  
    Under shining cloud ;  
Golden-haired and gay  
Started on his way  
    The laughing lad ;  
Time lay bright before,  
And a branch he bore  
    With blossoms clad.

O'er the wintry wold  
    Fell the twilight snow ;  
Homeward, hoarse and cold,  
    Flapped the famished crow.  
Haggard, frail, forlorn,  
On his rugged thorn  
    The grey-beard bent ;  
Night before him lay ;  
No star gleamed ; the way  
    No further went.

## MENA THE LIBYAN.

“ **T**HE boy so long delighteth in his play ;  
 The youth so long pursues his maid ; so  
                   long  
 The old man broods upon uneasiness,  
 That none can find the time—not even one—  
 In all the regions of the level world  
 To meditate upon the very God !”

And Mena, rising, fled the babbling streets ;  
 And climbing through the shadow of the woods,  
 Gained one great ledge which shelved above the  
                   mass  
 Of billowy foliage, and beheld beneath  
 The Libyan city on this hand, and on that  
 The plain of western waters. From below  
 No murmur save the woodland’s reached his ear :  
 And resting on the rocky ledge, he crossed  
 His arms upon his bosom and withdrew

His spirit from all things living, fixed it fast  
Upon the Life, and grew entranced in God.

And God upheld him, and he leaned on God  
And knew no fleshly need, no touch of time.

In the long summers—for the varying year,  
Even as the sylvan waters of a brook  
Divide against a boulder in the brook,  
And now the sunny current carries down  
Blue gleams of sky and leaves and flowers, and now  
Grey shadows, but through all the changeful day  
The boulder feels no change, even so the year  
Brought lapse of seasons, even so the man  
Of seasons and of years was unaware—  
In the long summers moss and tendrils grew  
About his limbs ; the spider wove her web  
Around his head. In wintry moons the trees  
Were shattered by the tempest in the woods ;  
But Mena heard not. Neither felt he rain  
Nor hoar-frost blanching tangled hair and beard  
Within his beard the small birds built in spring  
And, later, trills and chirps and gladdened wings  
Made happy music to the early sun  
Upon his bosom ; but he heard no sound.

And Mena waxed—like all things mortal—old,  
A haggard frame ! But still despite the years  
His spirit drooped nor withered—wrapt in God !  
The woodlands fell and rotted in their place ;  
The Libyan city crumbled, thundered down  
Like snow in April, drifted wide in dust  
Along the four great winds which purge the world ;  
And lo ! the waters of the western sea  
Drew ever further westward, sank and shrank,  
And left but sand and salt and thirst and fire,  
Mirage and dumb tremendous solitude.

And Mena, with a hopeless sigh, awoke :  
“ O Thou unknowable and holy God,  
How shall I hope to know Thee as Thou art ?  
Long hours I seek Thee, till my weary soul  
Sinks back to rest her weakness on the earth.  
O God, will ever thought be more than babe  
Which stretches to the moon its simple hands ?—  
The Lord be my protector, what is this ? ”

He rubbed his eyes and gazed, amazed, and shook  
With awe and speechless wonder ; for behold !  
The desert flared before him, and he stood  
Near trunks of forest changed to stumps of stone,

And saw the solitude of salt and sand  
Where no man in the living world had trod.

And Mena, while he gazed, became aware  
Of hoariest age and utter nakedness.  
He turned his face against the rock and wept.

Then lo ! upon the east the desert changed,  
As in a dream, to fields and homely trees  
And glittering waters ; and the weeping man  
Beheld them and his heart was lifted up ;  
And hastening on with feeble steps, he strove  
To reach that blessed isle of living land.  
He travelled all that day through sand and salt,  
Through valleys where in long-forgotten time  
Water had rolled the boulder, worn the cliff,  
But now from eye to eye 'twas stone and stone ;  
Then fell, outworn, and slumbered where he fell,  
But rose ere dawn and journeyed, wild with hope,  
Saying : " Those waters and delightsome trees  
Were surely a gracious vision sent of God  
To lead me onward." Then at length he marked  
Where limestone in a dark sierra jagged  
The scarlet of the morning. Here he climbed  
And saw beyond the ridge—oh, joy of joys !

The broad Nile flowing through a fruitful land,  
And sphinx and temple and pyramid and palm,  
Green fields, and men and women. And he lay  
And wept for gladness.

After he had reached  
That marvellous city of a later race,  
He rested many days—a shadow of man—  
And watched with awe the new old life, the same  
Old joys and sorrows of the ancient world ;  
And while he watched, the ancient thought recurred  
In language no man spoke, and “Ah !” he  
sighed,  
“The boy so long delighteth in his play ;  
The youth so long pursues his maid ; so long  
The old man broods upon uneasiness,  
That none can find the time—not even one—  
To meditate upon the very God !”

And even as he thought, another thought  
Broke slowly on him, like a tardy dawn  
Which colours weed and stone and common earth,  
And makes the homeliest seem divine and strange :  
“Perchance—it may be, though it seems so  
strange,—

Perchance the truest and the holiest life  
Is his who acts in God, not his who stands  
Enmarbled in a many-centuried dream  
Of who but God knows what he thinks is God !”

And Mena sighed but spoke not, only mused—  
“ I am but a babe delighted with Thy light,  
That hath stretched out to Thee its simple hands—  
A babe, O God, that now must die a babe  
And trust for growth in Thine eternal years !”

’Twas in these later days the man was named  
By those who knew him “ Mena,” for that he  
Through all that wind of change and whirl of waste  
Had stood the one man *constant* in the world.



## PEARLS AND SIMPLES.

## AN IDYL.

## I.

**H**IS long grey shadow lingers in the pass ;  
 He slowly gains the ridge ; he turns to  
                   wave

A last farewell. (God speed you !)—He is  
                   gone !

Sunset will light him to some quiet cave ;

Or haply, stretched a-lee some sheltering stone  
                   Among the mountain grass,

He'll lie to-night and listen to the deep

Hushed breathing of the hills, and watch the  
                   skies

Till one great star shall lead him by the eyes,  
 Through drowsy deserts, to the crib of sleep.

## II.

A merry ouzel chattering on his rock,  
A bleating lamb, will wake him ere the day  
Hath reddened to the flower of four o'clock,  
And he will rise and wander on his way.  
And this hath been his mode of life for years,—  
To roam in search of simples through the hills,  
To fish for pearls where upland waters fall  
Murmuring o'er mossy weirs,  
To sleep where fortune and when darkness  
wills—  
Praise be to Him who doth not sleep at all !

## III.

The little red-roofed town where he was born  
Sits robin-like amid the trees and snow ;  
And here he winters, making song and shoe  
Like old Hans Sachs. But let the windflower  
blow,  
And hyacinths light the woods with wells of  
blue,  
And white stars gem the thorn—  
The leafless sloe, why, lo you ! he is dressed  
For travel, and in honest leather shod  
From his own lapstone, starts 'mid smile and nod  
Hillward once more upon his annual quest.

## IV.

What rustic thorpe, lone farm, or bosky grange,  
But counts upon his coming year by year?  
He rarely fails them. In a world of change  
These old-time nooks to him are strangely  
dear.

He comes and goes ; he leaves at every door  
A cheery memory. When at last his way  
Shall lead him from the kindly homes of men,  
And he can come no more,

“If not this year, why, next,” the folk will say ;  
“He sometimes missed, but always came  
again.”

## V.

For habit makes us hopeful, and we thrive  
Best on this homely nurture of routine.  
“If not this year, why, next,” will oft be  
said ;

And so with them, long after grass is green  
Upon the simple mound where he is laid,  
He still will be alive—

A strong blithe man of helpful hand and speech,  
Still wandering somewhere, sitting by some fire  
Of farm or cottage in a neighbouring shire,  
Or telling tales beneath some village beech.

## VI.

Dear in a world of change, because they change  
So little, are these old homes. Since first he  
came,  
Roads, houses, trees, brooks, meadows, mountain-  
range  
Have, like the heaven above them, seemed the  
same.  
The ivied church hath scarcely hoarier grown,  
Yet age hath silvered many a lusty head ;  
The little ones of twenty years ago  
Have children of their own :  
Beneath the shadow of the elms the dead  
Have heaved the earth in many a grassy row.

## VII.

But most he haunts the hills. For days and days,  
Among the mossy solitudes, the coy  
Wild lives in fur and feather are his only  
Companions ; but a deep impassioned joy  
Prevents his heart from ever feeling lonely.  
To merely sit and gaze  
On God's green earth and gracious heaven, to live  
In cloud and rock, in lichen and in leaf,  
To feel but Nature's gladness, Nature's grief,  
Are happiness no pride of life could give.

## VIII.

He knows all tracks, the loops and glassy linns  
Of every burn, each winding river-reach ;  
The limits where each herb and flower begins  
And ends ; the virtues and the name of each.  
And often of these uplands doth he speak,  
As if in some mysterious way each stone  
And rush, and every cry and chirp of song  
Were his from plain to peak—  
As if they were in some strange sense his own  
And to none else could ever so belong.

## IX.

And oft he tells, in phrase of dreamy power,  
Of sights that filled his heart with strength and  
rest,—  
As, how he watched the lean blue heron wait  
With head and bill sunk gravely on its breast,  
Among the shadowy shoals, as fixed as fate,  
As patient of the hour ;  
And once when rain and wind had raged amain  
And all again was bright, he chanced to see  
A milk-white fawn beneath a rowan-tree  
Which blazed with crimson fruit and drops of rain.

## X.

As though of weightiest import, he insists  
On merest trifles, no one notes at all.  
God steeps, he says, the rain-clouds and the mists  
In gold of dawn and sunset ere they fall.  
Though we by tender gloamings moved may weep,  
He smiles; *his* sunset's but the other side  
Of some one else's morning. When he lies  
Beneath a tree to sleep,  
He thinks how leaves and little cares can hide  
God in His heaven and systems in their skies.

## XI.

The Oak-tree croons to him a wondrous song :  
" My type, which hath sufficed for centuries,  
Doth still hold good. Old elements new-  
wrought  
Have streamed from age to age beneath this  
guise.  
Through what most ancient language have  
man's thought  
And feeling streamed so long ? "  
To him the great Dust blown upon the wind  
Is a weird vision. Lo ! among her own,  
He sees sweep past, unworshipped and unknown,  
The venerable mother of mankind !

## XII.

A little naked child in tender wise  
She carries nestling to her slumb'rous breast.  
Her milk hath hushed its passionate human cries,  
And lulled it into ever dreamless rest.  
Absorbed in fantasy, he thinks he sees  
The infant's playthings as she glideth by,  
For countless fragments, curious and old,  
Strange animals and trees,  
Like broken arks of childhood, mingled lie  
Within her garment's deep mysterious fold.

## XIII.

He marvels at the discontent of men  
Cankering their lives with labour and despite.  
One April midnight, waking on the hill,—  
Jupiter set, Arcturus burning bright  
I' the central blue,—he heard a song-thrush  
thrill  
The wooded little glen  
With ravishing roulades ; and in the hush  
Of those blue heavens and that enchanted  
earth,  
He asked was all men strove and toiled for  
worth  
The rapturous music of that happy thrush.

## XIV.

The ancient mysteries of life and death  
 Perplex him not. Why should he hope or fear?  
 Because men clamour, and no one answereth  
 Out of the clouds? He knows that God is  
*here—*  
 Not in some distant heaven, but close at hand—  
 Around us, nay, within us—well aware  
 Of us and all our motions. Like a nest  
 The world lies in His hand.  
 What *can* the callow nestlings chirping there  
 Conceive of Him who holds them to His  
 breast?

## XV.

To him the doubts and anguish of the age  
 Seem raving winds among the peaks of stone.  
 O sceptic spirit, climb the hills and learn  
 That God exists, and man is not alone!  
 Question the Arctic lichen and the fern,  
 The moss and saxifrage!  
 High up the sea-pink blooms. 'Twill answer thee:  
 "The North wind blew us hither in days of  
 yore.  
 These rocks of ours were once an island shore  
 Amid the ice-drift of an ancient sea!"



## XVI.

The wandering flora of the Northern Star  
    Drifted for centuries on berg and floe.  
Through the white ages Europe gleamed afar—  
    One mighty snow-peaked archipelago.  
And here a fern was stranded, here a grass,  
    And here a saxifrage laughed out in flower  
    And made a gladness in the lone bright air.  
    Who saw the ages pass?  
Who shaped the land afresh, yet every hour  
    Thought these small fragile creatures worth His  
    care?

## XVII.

Who raised them with the hills on which they grew,  
    And bade His clouds subserve them? Who  
    sustained  
    Their weakness through the wondrous cosmic  
    change  
When the great ocean of the north was drained,  
    And new-time plants and beasts began to range  
    A continent made new?  
They blossomed in the prehistoric snow ;  
    They blossom still ; it may be that once more  
    New seas shall find them on their ancient shore  
Amid a later archipelago.

## XVIII.

Thus, being very sure of God, he takes  
     No trouble to himself whate'er befall.  
 Enough that God loves everything He makes—  
     Through countless ages hath remembered all.  
 Nor is he anywise concerned to know  
     Aught more of God than God may will. He  
         seeks  
     No pledge, no knowledge wherefore he exists  
     Or whither he shall go.  
 He lives on faith,—a flower upon the peaks,  
     Cared for and loved though wrapped in blind-  
         ing mists.

## XIX.

Out of delight to find a little space  
     For trees and flowers which he may call his own  
     In this old garden of God, where'er he goes  
 He carries apple-pip and cherry-stone,  
     And seed of divers trees ; and these he sows  
     In many a lonely place,  
 And little cairns mark every chosen spot.  
     Exceeding joy to him it is to know  
     His trees among the hills in hundreds grow,  
 And still will bloom when he is long forgot.

XX.

Thus through the years he wanders, gathering pearls  
For beauty, culling herbs for human pain,  
And planting trees to be his boys and girls—  
His fair and fruitful children. Not in vain  
Can he have lived whose heart hath found such rest,  
Who dwells in such high thoughts of men and  
things,  
Who loves through all his wayfaring to read  
And carry in his breast  
The book wherein old Epictetus sings  
The grand Te Deum of a pagan creed.

XXI.

For thus saith Epictetus: "Ought we not,  
Whether we dig or plough or eat, to sing  
To God this homage: '*Great is God who  
gives  
These tools of tillage and of harvesting ;  
Who fashioned unto every man that lives  
Hands equal to his lot :*  
And great is God who gives us each the power  
Of swallowing, and a stomach for our keep,  
And faculty of breathing while asleep,  
And imperceptible growth from hour to hour.'

## XXII.

“And this at all times and in every place  
We ought to sing ; but our most joyous praise  
Should rise to heaven that God hath given us grace  
To know these things, and walk in blameless  
ways.

Well, seeing most of you are dumb and blind,  
Were it not meet some man should fill for you  
This charge, and sing to God his whole life  
long

A hymn for all mankind ?

Besides, what else can Epictetus do,—

A lame old man, — save honour God with  
song ? ”

## CHRISTMAS EVE.

THE midnight Mass.

'Twas a snowy night ;

But the great Cathedral was warm and bright—  
 Ablaze with flame and colour, and filled  
 With a mist of incense, and music that thrilled  
 The motley audience drawn together,  
 Despite late hours and the wild white weather—  
 Partly from sentiment, partly from piety,  
 Partly in quest of a pleasing variety—  
 To view the strange spectacular ritual  
 (For which, O Catholics, Protestants twit you ill,  
 For why should one rank under worship of images  
 This beautiful scene handed down from the dim  
 ages ?)

Near the rails of the chancel the crib was seen,  
Roofed and clustered with winter-green ;  
On a truss of straw from the manger smiled  
The golden-nimbused celestial Child ;  
While over the crib gleamed the star which of old  
Led the Kings with their myrrh and frankincense  
and gold.

The service was odd, but of singular interest ;  
The strains of Mozart lulled all feelings of sin to  
rest ;  
The lights, fragrance, garlands of ivy and holly  
tree  
Moved the senses to worship—(Can that be  
idolatry?)—  
And all had been touched to a certain extent  
With a cosy religious sentiment,  
When the organ stopped and the singing ceased,  
And the people sat down ; and a grey-haired priest  
Mounted the pulpit in alb and stole,  
To save, if it might be, some sectary's soul.

At the side of the altar in pride of place  
Sat my Lord Archbishop enthroned ; and his  
Grace

Smiled out of gladness of heart as he viewed  
The half-heretic curious multitude  
Waiting, like furrows in spring, to receive  
The seed of the faith that Christmas Eve.

In beautiful language the preacher spoke  
Of the Syrian hills and the shepherd folk  
Who heard the Angels and saw the light  
As they watched their flocks in that ancient night.  
And then he marked how the Lord had come  
To a world that knew Him not, men who were  
dumb ;

But to-night, oh ! it was not the Angels alone  
Who sang ; oh, not only to these was He known ;  
But the whole world rejoiced in the joy of His  
birth !

From the East to the West round the peopled earth  
As the midnight travelled it carried along  
The joy of that birth, the thanksgiving of song.

As the preacher proceeded a strange thing occurred.  
My Lord Archbishop first fancied he heard  
The wind rising without ; then a tramping of feet ;  
Then a hoarse vague clamour of crowds in the  
street ;

Then wailing and sobbing and agonised screams.  
 Then his Grace grew aware—as a man when he  
 dreams—  
 That the walls of the church were absorbed by the  
 night,  
 And the snow-flakes were falling.

Then, lo ! a strange light  
 Like a cloud hid the altar ; and in it there stood  
 Christ crowned with His thorns — pale — and  
 ghastly with blood  
 From the wounds of His scourging.

Behind the bright cloud,  
 Dimly seen, swayed a moaning, tumultuous crowd  
 Round a shadowy cross, which they struggled to  
 bear.

Christ spoke : “ What availeth your praise or your  
 prayer ?  
 What profits to hallow the day of my birth,  
 Yet ignore that I still am among you on earth ?  
 Of Christ ye but *dream*. I am here ; but ye know



The mere legend of Christ—not the Christ in His  
    woe,  
In His Church, in His flesh.”

From behind the bright cloud  
Rose the sorrowful moan of the shadowy crowd.

“And these, too, are Christ! Yet *who* is it sees  
How he scourges and pierces and slays me in  
    these?  
Behold them and know them!”

Then out of the night  
Came the crowd, and were seen in the cloud's  
    mystic light.  
They swept by in thousands. The sound of their  
    woe  
Filled the midnight with terror!

Whatever men know  
Of the ills of the world, it was there in some form,  
Flitting out of the splendour and into the storm.  
All tribes and all nations, each colour of skin,

All aspects of sorrow and suffering and sin,  
All the poor of all cities, all shapes of disease,  
Passed sobbing and writhing.

And Christ was of these—  
These *were* Christ in His flesh ! And my Lord, as  
they passed,  
Perceived that on all, from the first to the last,  
Lay a cross like a shadow.

Then lo !—in a wink  
All was changed.

His Grace yawned.

“ Have been dozing, I think ! ”

## ANNO DOMINI XXXVII.

**G**REY dawn upon the mountain. Grey and  
 cold,  
 O'er shivering pines and dripping boulders rolled  
 The great mist upward to the unseen peak.  
 The wind blew chill. The scant light, grey and  
 bleak,  
 Showed haggard outlines.

In the stony waste  
 Knelt by a torrent one who seemed in haste  
 To cleanse his hands of some deep ghastly stain.  
 He washed and moaned. Again and yet again  
 He raised them to the bleak grey light, and scanned  
 Their horror with wild eyes ; then gathered sand  
 And bent and washed with frenzy.

Upward drew  
 The spectral mist. Far out, the day was blue

Above the tumbled forest slopes : but here,  
 Above the man, the icy atmosphere  
 Was filled with mist and shadow of mist.

No tree

Throve on these heights. No grass grew. One  
 could see

But vast bald domes, and grim escarpments strewn  
 With block and shingle—stone, and stone, and stone,  
 All streaming with the vapours of the peak.

The man beside the torrent with a shriek  
 Arose : “The waters mock at my despair ;  
 Their jeering voices call me everywhere ;  
 They madden me ! The clouds upon the height  
 Drain all the depths of Heaven day and night,  
 And day and night I wash, but never more  
 Will these red hands——” He wrung them with  
 the roar

Of some wild beast that cannot break its cage.

Far down upon the boundless foliage  
 O’ the valleys burst the sun. A brilliant green  
 Laughed out from rocky slope and deep ravine.  
 The low hills glittered. Silvery waters ran  
 Through clearings in the wilderness.

The man  
Beneath his cloud as from a cavern gazed  
And shuddered with the cold. The morning  
blazed—

A vast blithe fire which drew his steps below !  
Blue flanks and shining summits capped with snow  
Rose where the distant Alps walled in the wide,  
Glad scene.

The man went down the mountain-side.

He reached the pines ; then stopped.

What sudden fear  
Caused him to crouch and tremble ?

Hand to ear,  
He listened, breathless ! Rising from afar,  
A strange wild sound, flung back from crag and scar,  
Came floating through the hills—and sank and died.

The man glared fiercely down the gorge and cried :  
“ Tiberius sends his bloodhounds forth at last ! ”

He turned to flee, but paused.

Then slowly passed  
The look of terror from his hunted eyes.  
“ An end of all things comes for him who dies, ”

He murmured, rising. "Earth can compass not  
 More hideous exile than this savage spot.  
 What worse can Cæsar do than take away  
 My life? What then! Who slays me will but slay  
 Hunger and thirst and weariness and cold;  
 And I shall sleep—and never more behold  
 Those awful eyes—that thorn-crowned head which  
       fills  
 The nights with terror!"

Echoing through the hills  
 Once more the trumpets blew a long wild strain.  
 The man plunged downward through the woods to  
       gain  
 The winding levels of the rugged pass.

With sunlight flashed from spear-head and cuirass,  
 Through the green glen the Roman soldiers strode.  
 Red-plumed beyond the spears their tribune rode.

The man stood forth and with uplifted hand  
 Cried: "Halt!—It is your prisoner bids you stand;  
 The fugitive Tiberius seeks is here;  
 Bring forth your chains!"

The Roman chief rode near  
 And eyed the man.

The man stood gaunt and grim ;  
Half clad in wolf-skin ; naked, breast and limb ;  
Through tangled hair his eyeballs blazed like flame.

“What man are you?” the tribune asked—“Your name?”

He answered : “Once I ruled Judea. Men  
Bowed low and named me Pontius Pilate then.”

Wondering the soldiers gazed. The tribune said :  
“You strangely err. Tiberius is dead.  
We seek you not.”

The legionaries marched on  
With iron tramp. Long after they had gone  
The man still stared.

At set of sun that day  
Unhappy Pilate cast his life away.

THE END.



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